

SRI SATHYA SAI BABA: The Lord Incarnate

By

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THE JOURNAL OF THE LANCET

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Why does the Lord Incarnate ?

The Lord has to come in human form and move about among men, so that He can be listened to, contacted, loved, revered and obeyed. He has to speak the language of men and behave like human beings, as a member of the species. Otherwise, He will be either negated and neglected or feared and avoided.

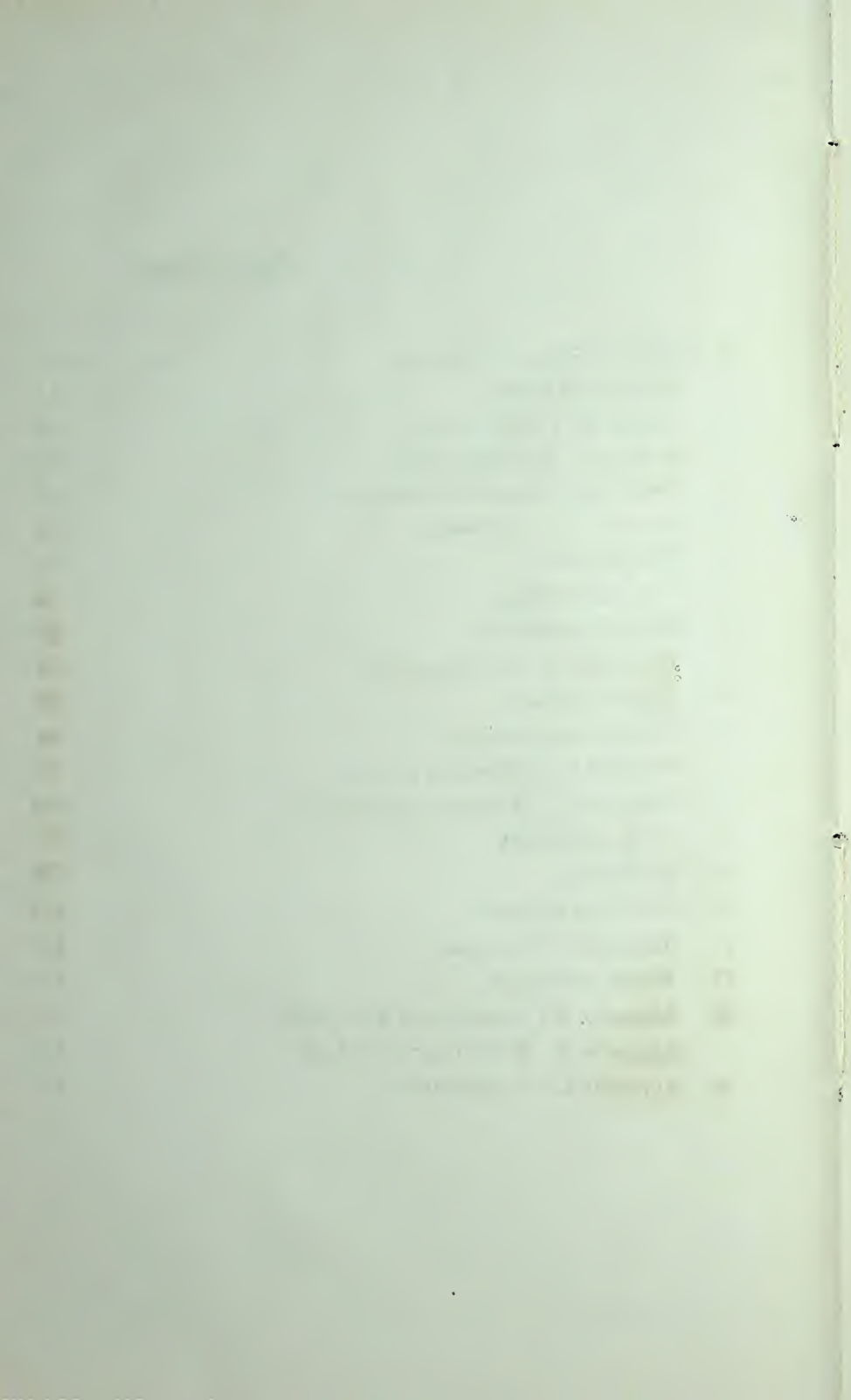
Whenever asanthi or disharmony overwhelms the world, the Lord incarnates in human form to establish the modes of earning prasanthi, or peace, and to reeducate the human community in the paths of peace. At the present time, strife and discord have robbed peace and unity from the family, the school, the society, the religions, the cities and the state.

The Avtar behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but rises into his superhuman heights so that mankind can aspire to reach the heights and through that aspiration actually reach him.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Preface : A Pilgrim's Progress

Twenty years ago if I were asked to write even an article on Sri Sathya Sai Baba I would have considered it ludicrous to the point of being humiliating. But on the sands of time the moving finger writes and having write moves on. And here am I, writing the preface to a whole book on him; a book which has unfolded itself through the pages of time taking up my whole attention and years of painstaking pilgrimage, in the process, not only discovering myself but also finding and holding on to the bedrock of faith. For what is life without faith ? How and why I have been transformed is as long and interesting a tale as that of the Ancient Mariner.

During 1968-69 I worked as Reader in the Post Graduate Deptt. at Simla. A weekly bulletin was published from the Institute and its editor was a close friend of mine. I was a regular subscriber to the bulletin. After some time the magazine started carrying a regular feature on Sai Baba. So prejudiced was I against Baba that although I did not care to go through this feature yet I felt deeply outraged and even infuriated by its mere presence. With a feeling of deep hurt I wondered whether all the past and present saints of India had become secondary and irrelevant as compared with this magic maker—men like Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Ramakrishna and saints like Aadi Sankaracharya, Buddha and Mahavira. Is Sai Baba greater than all of them to deserve paeans of praise to be sung week in and week out ? So violent was my reaction that I stopped subscribing to the magazine altogether.

In 1971 I joined the Post Graduate Centre of the Punjab University at Rohtak as Professor and I shifted from Simla to Rohtak alongwith my family. However, here too Baba continued to haunt me. The house I rented at Rohtak belonged to one Shri Nand Gopal Goyal. While I rented part of the house, Mr Goyal himself occupied the rest of it. I held my landlord in great esteem as he had earlier taught Maths and had retired as a senior officer of the education deptt. I considered him a great intellectual. So I was all the more amazed when soon it became known to me that he

held Sathya Sai Bhajans once a week at his residence. To me it was a great contradiction that a Professor of Maths actively participated in Sathya Sai Bhajans. However I did not have the guts to discuss the issue with Mr Goyal. After all, he was a venerated old man, he was my land lord, and I had no right to question his religious beliefs. Yet I became annoyed at the fact that my wife started regularly attending the Bhajan sessions. Perhaps the reason was that while I was a hard headed intellectual, she was a simple hearted woman who preferred Bhakti Marg (Path of Devotion) to the Jnana Marg (Path of Intellect).

Once, on her return from Bhajans my wife said to me that she felt that she had seen and known '*this man*' all along her life both in her conscious and sub-conscious self though she was unaware of his name or place of abode. She felt greatly happy now that she had come to realize that he had never been far away from her. She persuaded me to go along with her to attend Bhajans at least once. If nothing else I would feel calm and peaceful for the one hour duration of the Bhajans. Reluctant though I was, I could not say no to my wife. During that one hour I was not the least impressed. For my heart was not in the Bhajans. I looked and looked at the picture of Baba swathed in his long red robe, with that shock of Negroid hair on his head. He appeared far from my idea of Divinity. Wrapped up in my own preconceived egoistic notions I remained unaffected by Baba's personality. On the contrary he appeared to be rather odd to me. Yet my wife continued to talk highly of him.

After a few months I had to change house. I felt happy that now my wife and I would be rid of the nuisance of the Satsang held at the residence of Shri Nand Gopal Goyal. Little did I know that Baba was not going to let go of me. Close by our new residence lived the Director of our Institute. He too turned out to be a devotee of Baba. Of and on he also held Bhajans at his residence and the members of the staff were invited to the same. I considered it a compulsion to attend these Bhajan sessions as it could be used as a ploy to curry favour with the Director. I tried to sit among the front rows so that he would note my presence. During my first visit I carried a good amount of money too with the sole intention of offering it at Aarati after Pooja. What a disappointment it was to be told that no offerings are allowed at Sathya Sai Bhajans. So,

no one was allowed to offer anything. This was the first thing that left a lasting impression on my mind.

As I was a hard nut to crack Baba continued to soften me through chance meetings with his devotees, sometimes, much against my wishes. The ground was so hard that no seeds of devotion or faith sprouted. In due course of time an event of great import took place. One of my friends gave me Howard Murphet's famous book 'Sai Baba : Man of Miracles'. The author is an Australian who stumbled upon Sai Baba in his quest for Divinity in India. The book published by the famous publishers Macmillan & Co., is a record of Murphet's interactions with Baba. I considered Murphet a great intellectual as he had been associated with the theosophical movement. He had worked in the army too during the second world war and possessed great investigative abilities too. Here was a man who would not cloud the truth with cobwebs of superstition or blind faith. After the war he worked as P.R.O. for some time but was soon bitten by the spiritual bug. He firmly believed that India was still the land of sages and saints and the only place where spirituality could still be found. With this conviction he came to India in 1964 in search of some realized saint or Yogi who could quench his spiritual thirst. He had read 'The Discovery of Secret India' by Paul Brunton which carries various accounts of Indian holy men. As the book was not very old he believed to find some godman still alive to guide him. With such firm conviction Murphet and his wife landed in India.

Once in India the quest was a bewildering one. Where to find the god-realized one ? Whom to ask ? India—a vast land—was mysterious. Sometimes the search would become annoying and exasperating leading to a dead end. From Bombay he travelled to Delhi. People with whom he talked laughed at him. They told him to call off his search for divinity as India and Indians had undergone a sea change. Materialism had overtaken spiritualism, they said. But Murphet was not going to say die. He was convinced that all the hinderances would but lead to success some day. So the search went on. The natural places to go were Varanasi, Haridwar, Rishikesh, and many other towns and places. He came across confidence-tricksters, pseudo-Yogis, saints and sadhus. His thirst led him on and on in search of tranquility and peace.

Tired, exasperated and in low spirits, one evening he prayed : 'Oh God ! If you do exist anywhere in India please show me the

path to reach you !' It was Sai Baba who answered his prayers and led him to himself. Someone told him of Sathya Sai. The prospect of reaching his abode was daunting. But Murphet was not the one to be daunted. He was told that the Ashram of Baba was in a remote village of Andhra Pradesh which was not accessible by train. The village—Puttaparthi—could be reached only on bullock cart as it was not even on the bus route. The nearest railway station was nearly 20 km away. But all these difficulties posed no problem for Murphet who finally made it to Baba along with his wife. For the next five years he remained there in close proximity of Sathya Sai, travelling along with him wherever he went. When he first saw the resplendent form of Baba he knew he had come to the right place. His soul said to him : This it ! This is the God you have been looking for ! The search was over. The thirst was quenched. He went, he saw and was conquered !

Murphet's first reaction ranged from disbelief to suspicion. Was this man producing all these items like lockets, holy ash, rosaries etc. from out of nothing ? Was it a creative manifestation of his divine powers ? Or was it sleight of hand like so many magicians bringing out rabbits out of their hats ? Day in and day out both Murphet and his wife scrutinized Baba under closest and keenest observation. Murphet's wife some how procured the opportunity to wash Baba's robes. And subjected them to careful investigation. Not finding any secret pockets or receptacles, she informed her husband. The test of time proved to them beyond doubt that the miraculous powers of Baba were nothing short of powers of the Creator.

Murphet stayed at Prasanthi Nilayam for about five years. During this period he got very close to Sathya Sai who took him along in the course of journeys to Bombay, Dwarka and many other places. During this period he was witness to innumerable miracles performed by Baba such as changing a piece of rock into sugarcane and then the same into an icon of Krishna; producing nectar out of sand, etc. Apart from curing incurable chronic diseases he found Baba indulging in O.B.Es.—leaving his body and 'travelling' through long distances, defying the laws of time and place, to help his devotees out of tight spots or to save someone from committing suicide. The feats were mind boggling and confirmed what Baba had stated in a letter to his brother dated 25th of May 1947 : "No one can comprehend my glory, whoever he is, whatever his methods of enquiry, however long his attempt." Among

some of the astounding miracles to which Murphet was a witness were two cases when Baba restored to life two dead men namely one Mr. Radha Krishna during the sixties and Walter Cowan during the seventies. The case of Walter Cowan is a well documented one where Cowan remained in the hospital morgue for hours with his ears and nose plugged before Baba arrived and resurrected him. Murphet's studies led him to write two more books namely 'Sai Baba : Avatar' and 'Sai Baba : Invitation to Glory'. Both these books have been published by Macmillan (India) Ltd., New Delhi.

I have dwelt in detail on Murphet's books as they left a lasting impact on me. The scales began falling. I said to myself: Why not discard prejudice and try to discover the truth for yourself? After all, prejudice is not a scientific attitude! The study of Murphet's books led me to some sort of vague faith in Baba and I began to think of him, to mentally pray to him, off and on.

In 1974 my eldest son became critically ill. It was during his illness that I called upon Baba to cure him, prayed to him for my son's recovery, and decided to undertake a pilgrimage to offer my thanks at his Lotus Feet if he restored my son to good health. Baba showered his grace in compassion and soon my son recovered. But promises are easier to make than to keep. It took me nearly four years to redeem my pledge. In April 1978 I resigned from the Rohtak University. It was only after a gap of six months without a job that I was pleasantly surprised on being appointed as V.C. of Himachal University. This shower of Baba's grace reminded me of my pledge and I decided not to procrastinate any more. Thus began my first journey to Baba's Ashram namely Prasanthi Nilayam—Abode of Peace.

In this pilgrimage I was not alone. With me went my eldest son and daughter too. My first glimpse of Baba's abode filled me with all sorts of mixed feelings and emotions. After all it was a journey of discovery, a journey out of disbelief into faith, a journey of inquiry that finally revealed itself to be a journey to God.

As I entered the village of Puttaparthi my eyes were rivetted to a beautiful building atop a small hillock. That is the Administrative Block of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed University). The Vice Chancellor then was eminent scholar and educationist Dr. V. K. Gokak. He had earlier served as Vice Chancellor at Bangalore. I had the opportunity of meeting him much earlier when he was Director of the Centre of Advanced Studies

at Simla. So it was that I met Dr. Gokak who took me to Baba. Baba was happy to meet me. On being told that I had lately been appointed V. C. he said "Very happy". I prayed for his grace and guidance to run the University and he showered it by waving his hand in thin air and 'manifesting' Vibhuti which he gave me in ample quantity. Little knowing that I had been bestowed with the panacea for all diseases I kept away the Vibhuti in a paper packet which I later lost. Imagine my regret and repentance when, later on, we came to realize the value of the holy ash manifested by the Lord in his infinite compassion !

The result of my first visit to Baba was that I developed great regard for him. I held him in the same veneration as great saints, yogis and self-realized men. But my monkey mind still jumped from doubt to doubt and refused to accept him as an incarnation. My intellect revolted against accepting him in the category of Rama and Krishna and when I heard Bhajans extolling him as Sai Rama or Sai Krishna I felt a little hurt. Perhaps my wife was in a better position as she had become a devotee steeped in Bhakti and not afflicted by the disease of doubt that follows in the wake of efforts to 'know' an Avatar. It was only later that I came to the realization that man with his infinitely small knowledge and puny intellect is too presumptuous only because of his ego. And, lost in the darkness of this ego he cannot see the Divine who is beyond all laws of time and space, transcending cause and effect. His actions cannot be explained even if all scientists join together in their efforts to investigate Him. It is only when the ego is totally surrendered that some glimpses of divinity are visible as a consequence of the Lord's compassion and grace. I too, like so many before me, was thus lost in darkness, till Sathya Sai himself decided to redeem me, like the Ancient Mariner, and lead me from darkness unto light, from falsehood to truth thus guiding me from the mortal to the Infinite.

So did I remain in darkness till 1986 when it became evident to me through various events that Baba is not only an Avatar but a full Avatar endowed with all the sixteen attributes of a Godhead. But such a realization can never dawn on hearsay evidence of other people's experiences contained in books. Study of even a myriad books cannot produce the conviction born out of first hand observation and experience. The bedrock of my faith is what I saw and experienced during my stay at Baba's abode—Prasanthi Nilayam—

from 20th of February to the 27th of April in the year 1986. During my stay there I was flooded with evidence of Baba's divine powers. Step by step his glory was revealed to me. The daily miracles were so dumbfounding that the bug of intellectualism that afflicted me was decimated by faith ; faith based on what I myself saw and experienced. If all my experiences of this period are narrated it would need a separate book to contain them. Narrated below are just a few of those experiences that overwhelmed and chastened, purified and purged me.

Baba often says : you come to me only when I call you ! The call, in my case, came just after June 84. My first visit had not brought me spiritually any nearer to Baba. That had been in 1978, more as fulfilment of a pledge I had taken than a spiritual quest. During June 84 and Nov. 84 I often thought of Baba. It was in Nov. 84 that I went to Hyderabad to conduct Viva Voce of a Ph. D. student. From Hyderabad to Puttaparthi is only an overnight journey. So after my work at Hyderabad, I left for Baba's abode. Once there, I tried to obtain an interview with Baba but did not succeed. I returned to Kurukshetra after a week's stay at Prasanthi Nilayam. This visit increased my devotion towards Baba and I began contemplating upon him. On the night of 24th of Feb., 1985 he blessed me in a dream.

In early January of 1986 I again reached Prasanthi Nilayam, On reaching there I found Prasanthi Nilayam like a body without soul as Baba was at Bangalore. He was expected back in 3-4 days time. I was lucky enough to get one of the flats in the Aashram and decided to wait. Those who have been in a similar situation will realize how difficult it is to pass time in Prasanthi Nilayam when Baba is away. So I bought a few books from the bookstore in the Aashram and utilized my time reading them. Among them was J. Hislop's 'My Baba and I' which gripped me. Hislop is one of those who have attained an exalted position in spiritualism having begun his quest at the early age of sixteen. It was in search of God that he visited India and his quest ended at the Lotus Feet of Sathya Sai who revealed his cosmic form to Hislop. His book contains his experiences and some well documented accounts of the manifestation of Baba's Divine miraculous powers. Hislop is also one of those very few lucky ones to whom Baba regularly sends messages transcending the bounds of time and space.

As I waited for Baba I too began to toy with the idea of writing a book on him exploring whether he is an incarnation. I was also eager to start a Centre for Research in Spiritualism. I wished to discuss this issue also with Baba. Some other questions were also nagging me. But there seemed to be no end in sight of my waiting. Eagerness gave way to disappointment as Baba did not return even after a week. In low spirits I prayed to Baba before going to bed : 'Swami ! I came for your blessings and with the hope that you will guide me ! There are so many questions bothering me to which I seek answers from you ! I have waited so long and am now left with no option but to go back disappointed without your Darshan and blessings ! Who knows when, if at all, I may get the chance to come again !' And then sleep overtook me.

But lo and behold ! There he was standing right in front of me with his lovingly piercing gaze fixed on me, urging me on : 'Shoot your questions now. I have come in answer to your call.' I asked all the questions I wished to and Baba answered all of them with utmost love, removing all my doubts. When I asked him about my wish to start a Research Centre in Spiritualism he said to me : 'What do you know of spiritualism ? You have not gone through the primary stages even. Do some Saadhna first.' And he was gone as suddenly as he had come. As he left I awakened and noted down all the answers that he had given to my questions. And so it was that he made me realize the truth of his statement : "Whenever I appear in a dream it is to communicate something to the individual; it is not a mere dream as is generally known. It is a real appearance." This event not only filled me with tranquility but also fortified my faith in Baba. My devotion to and faith in him began to soar high as I had now got proof of his omniscience and omnipresence.

I returned home in bliss. But the desire for a personal interview began to urge me on to plan another visit. So it was that I reached Prasanthi Nilayam in Feb. 1986 with the intention of staying there for at least a couple of months. The longing for a personal interview with Baba was very strong. But I was told that no one could arrange or fix it up. The only way was to sit in the courtyard of his Aashram twice a day—one among the thousands—and pray to him. He himself selects those whom he calls for interview from amongst the thousands who sit for Darshan once in the mornings and then again in the afternoons. Even Prof. Kasturi

or Kutumba Rao—who attended upon Baba—could not arrange an interview. I had to take my chance like so many others—one among equals.

I must digress here to narrate the whole manner in which things are organized in the Aashram. At about seven in the morning and four in the afternoon all devotees—irrespective of social or economic status—have to assemble in the outer courtyard of Prasanthi Nilayam. All of them—except the very sick and infirm—have to sit in rows on the bare gravel—men and women in separate compounds. About half an hour before Baba is due to appear for Darshan random numbers are drawn for each row. The row which gets number one moves into the inner courtyard and occupies the first row there. And so on for the other rows. Thus while sitting in the outer courtyard one does not know where he is to sit in the inner courtyard. Once everyone is settled inside Baba appears and goes round giving Darshan, accepting letters and sometimes even talking to some devotee whom he wishes to. While going round he picks up ten to twenty persons for personal interview. So, no one knows who is going to be the lucky one. All one can do is to pray silently. And rich and poor, the V.C. and the commoner, all have to sit together and take their chance.

I too had to undertake this daily penance. And a penance it surely is—sitting cross-legged on bare gravel for at least a couple of hours twice a day. Imagine the predicament of people who have never practised sitting like that—men with inflated egos of bigwigs, and foreigners, who find it intensely mortifying to sit like that for long periods. Yet the beaming faces of foreigners speak of the intense faith and love that they cherish towards Baba to think nothing of physical discomfort sometimes bordering on torture. The predicament of foreign women is all the more piteous. They have to buy sarees and learn to put them on as the religious regimen of Prasanthi Nilayam requires that maximum parts of one's body—both in case of men and women—should be covered.

My penance went on for a few days—days that seemed to be years. Each time I tried I either get a back seat or otherwise Baba would just pass me by and totally ignore me. Disappointed, I trudged back to my room lost in introspection. Was I a sinner beyond redemption? Others were recipients of his compassion and grace. He would materialize Vibhuti for one, talk to another and take letters from yet others. But even my letter—which I carried each

day—could not be accepted by him. What was I to do but pray all the more ?

At last the day arrived—the 23rd of Feb. the day when Baba accepted my letter. And the very next day he called me for an interview alongwith another fifteen or twenty persons. Baba took us all into his interview room. He conversed with us as a Group first. Then individually he talked to us materializing lockets etc. for people after ascertaining what one wished to have. Thereafter Baba took each person into an adjacent room to discuss personal problems.

During this session of wish-fulfilment Baba materialized lockets, rings, rosaries etc. in a trice for all those present. It seemed so natural and effortless for him that it was an eye opener for any doubting Thomas amongst us. But the most amazing was the wishfulfilment of a young man of around twenty years of age. Impelled perhaps by a desire to test Baba this boy asked him for 'Halwa' (Indian pudding). Baba smilingly cupped his hands and in a trice his hands were brimming with fresh hot 'Halwa' which even spilled on to the floor. Baba gave most of it to the young man but distributed some to each one of us present. I was elated to partake of the divine preparation and saved some particles which I later sent home for my family.

My personal experience during this session was also delightful. While Baba was materializing various items for others I too was busy thinking that if Baba told me to ask for a boon I would seek a ring with Baba's image superscribed on it with upraised palm showering grace. However, when Baba did ask me what I would like to have I could only blabber out : 'Baba ! I wish only for your love and grace.' He replied : 'That is always with you. But what would you like as a keepsake ?' And the monkey mind answered : 'Baba ! You are omniscient. Then why ask me ?' The room reverberated with his laughter. His hand went round in the familiar motion and a ring appeared in him palm. He asked for my right hand and slipped the ring onto my middle finger. What a perfect fit it was ! And Baba's image in his blessing form smiling at me. I blurted out : 'Baba ! I wanted just this kind of ring.'

Thereafter Baba took me for private conversation to the adjacent room. Once there, I bowed at his lotus feet and was so overwhelmed that it became difficult for me to converse. But, was there any need to tell anything to one who knows all ? He told me

all about my past. Also, what had transpired with me at Kurukshetra. And he told me not to worry as he would look after me and set things right. He laid bare my character, temperament, and family affairs. He also said that I suffered from anxiety neurosis which was a hindrance in my output as an author. He also knew of my insomnia and other family matters which need not be recounted here. He told me not to worry and to leave everything to him for he would set things right.

Thereafter I stayed in Prasanthi Nilayam for a couple of months. During this period miracles were a daily occurrence. But all of them cannot be recounted here. Mention of some of them has been made in this book. The total outcome of my stay was the firm faith in Baba's divinity that I developed after this pilgrimage. I returned with the conviction that Baba is definitely an Avatar endowed with all sixteen attributes. This conviction is based not solely on his miracles but on the totality of his personality of which his discourses, educational activities, social reform, service activities are a manifestation. His greatest miracle is the transformation one undergoes as a result of his mere presence or even omnipresence. Many scientists have come from time to time, observed him, and returned convinced of his divinity. Innumerable scholars have written books and articles about him. But to be able to see even a glimpse of the Divine, one must pray sincerely. For it is only when he wills that we get that glimpse. Baba says: "You cannot understand the nature of my reality either today, or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent inquiry, even if all mankind joins in the effort." Man is engulfed in the darkness of delusion forgetting that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. Therefore, waste not your time and life ! Go to Prasanthi Nilayam. Examine Sathya Sai for yourself. And form opinion not on hearsay but on your own firsthand experience !

The writing work of the present book began in 1987 and its Hindi edition was sent to press in 1988. During its writing period I had many a miraculous experience which made me aware of the continuity of Baba's grace. On July 29, 1988 I, all of a sudden, suffered a massive and severe heart attack. It is only through the grace of Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba that I could survive from this fatal ailment. During that period some of my friend and I myself

had dreams which drove home the fact in my mind that Baba alone had saved me and given a fresh lease of life.

On December 24, 1988 the Hindi edition of this book was released from the press and I rushed to Puttaparthi to present its Copy to Baba. Baba accepted it very lovingly, blessed me and permitted me to touch His Blessed Feet. He created vibhuti some of which He gave me to eat, and some, with his own hand, He smeared on my forehead, whereby, I think, he had wiped out therefrom some dark portentous lines written by providence.

In preparation of the English edition of the book I have sought and got cooperation from a number of Sai-devotees. Prof. Radhey Mohan Rai, Head of English Department, Government College Alwar, who himself is a Sai-devotee and who has written an original book on Sri Sathya Sai Baba, has gladly prepared the English version. Shri S. Narayanan a Sai-devotee from Allahabad, has given ample cooperation in the translation of the book. Dear Shri Anubandh has typed the manuscript with keen interest. The responsibility of reading the proof has been accepted by Dr. S. N. Bajpai as a token of Sai-service. In addition, he has also inserted some excerpts from Baba's Discourses on the blank spaces available in the book.

In this way I have received full-cooperation from Sai-devotees in preparation of the present English edition. I am grateful to all of them and I have firm faith that they will get Baba's Grace as well for their services.

In the end, with due apology for all the short-comings, omissions and commissions, if any, I dedicate this English Edition to the SAI-DEVOTEES. Therewithal with a humble heart I express my gratitude to Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba by whose Grace this work has been accomplished.

—Ganpati Chandra Gupta

BIKANER

Guruvar (Thursday)

November 18, 1993

The Blessed Family

It is only in blessed families that great men, saints and pious souls take birth. For in their case the choice is made by the pious souls themselves. Such a blessed family is the family of Sri Ratnakar Raju of Puttaparthi village in Anantpur Distt. of Andhra Pradesh. For therein was born Sri Sathya Sai Baba who commands a following of around forty million people today.

Penda Venkappa Raju and Eswaramma were chosen as parents. Kondama Raju, the grandfather, was an extraordinary person who could himself be called a saint. A yogi who went on to attain the age of 110 years, he passed most of his time in the worship and contemplation of God. His later years were dedicated to religious regimens. He had mastered Ramayana by heart and read the scriptures daily. He observed fasts on religious celebrations and had attained a state of God Consciousness.

Satyabhama, the royal consort of Lord Krishna, appeared to Kondama Raju in a dream, sobbing and bemoaning that she had no dwelling. This inspired Kondama Raju to build a temple for her where pilgrims to Puttaparthi still pay their homage. He was a follower of Venka Avadhoot—one time renowned yogi and saint. Kondama Raju had served his preceptor well and Venkavadhoot was pleased to be his spiritual guide and guardian.

One day Kondama Raju sat under a Banyan tree contemplating on God. Suddenly his Guru appeared. The Guru told the pupil that mother earth was sad for it was beset with unrighteousness. Consequently Narayana (The Lord himself) was going to incarnate in human form soon and he would be able to see the Lord. Little did the grandsire realize that Narayana referred to his own grandson—Sathya Narayan Raju—our Sai Baba of today. It was only later on, when Sathya's miracles made him ponder, that he realized the full importance of the Avadhoot's prophesy.

Sathya's maternal grandfather—Subbaraju—was also a great devotee of Lord Siva. In his own village he too constructed a temple dedicated to Lord Siva. The Lord gave him a boon in the form of a daughter whom he named Eswaramma. Literally, the word means 'Mother of God' and the aptness of the name became evident decades later only when her son Sathya Sai revealed his cosmic form to his devotees.

As their children grew up to be of age Time, the prime mover, brought their parents together to have matrimonial alliance between Pedda Venkappa Raju and Eswaramma. Subbaraju too settled down in Bukkapattanam later.

Sathya's grandmother Lakshamma was also a devout lady. She was a devotee of Lord Satyanarayana. Sathya's mother Eshwaramma too observed fasts and penances. She visited the Siva Temple on Mondays and went to the Hanumana shiine on Saturdays. Professionally too Kondama Raju was involved with saints and religious practices. He used to perform religious plays or Hari Kathas. Thus he was always in contact with saints and witness to miracles. The environment of the family was thus befitting for Sathya to be born in.

Eswaramma's first child was Sheshama Raju. Thereafter she mothered two daughters. But after that she suffered four miscarriages, one after the other. The elders in the family especially women, became worried. Some attributed this to evil powers while as others considered it a result of Eswaramma's weak health. When she conceived for the eighth time Lakshamma offered special prayers to Lord Satyanarayana to placate him. Her prayers bore fruit and a son was born to Eswaramma in the early hours of the 23rd of November, 1926 at six minutes past five. According to the Hindu calendar it was an extraordinarily auspicious day and time. When labour pangs started the mother-in-law was away at the house of the village priest participating in the recitation of Satyanarayana Katha. Word was repeatedly sent to her but she arrived only after having completed the Katha and taken 'prasadam' which she gave to Eswaramma. Minutes later was born the son who was named Satyanarayan Raju—our beloved Satya Sai Baba of today.

Sathya Sai : Early Years

"The time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderfully expensive infinite heart of Chaitanya... one who would see God in every being and whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony."

--Swami Vivekanand

The day, the time and the place were chosen. The parents to be blessed were also marked. For the event of an Avatar is a momentous event decided by the Lord himself ! And blessed are the chosen ones ! Blessed also, are those who are born contemporaneous with the Avatar and are chosen to be given glimpses of Divinity. For awareness of God is being in the light which later on leads one to be one with the light. And the light is God !

The Avatar--in the form of Sathya Sai--descended on the earth on the 23rd day of November in the year 1926. The coming of Sathya Sai has been presaged by strange, mysterious incomprehensive events. For the coming of the Lord is no ordinary event ! The chosen mother was Eswamma. The name itself means 'Mother of the Lord'. During her pregnancy Lord Satyanarayana appeared in a dream to her mother-in-law. She told the expectant mother not to be scared or bewildered by strange happenings, if any. And so it transpired with Eswamma one day at the village well. She saw a luminous ball of blue light come rolling towards her and fainted. She felt as if the light had entered into her--perhaps an indication of divine pregnancy. For what is light but the form of God !

Sathya's birth was preceded by mysterious events. Late one night his father--Pedda Venkappa Raju--was awakened on hearing divine music being played upon the musical instruments lying in a corner of the room. On investigation he discovered everyone in the

house fast asleep. But the musical variations of the instruments had been seen and heard by him in his full consciousness. What was the symbolism of all this ? Being a simple peasant himself he sought an explanation from a learned astrologer. On being told of the event he enquired if the music was sweet or jarring. 'It was sweet and heavenly', answered the father. The astrologer then enquired if some lady in the house was pregnant. Receiving an answer in the affirmative he concluded that some holy and blessed soul must be about to take birth. This music must be meant to announce and please the coming of some blessed soul.

The grandfather of Sathya—Sri Kodamma Raju—was a very pious and religious person. His preceptor—Venka Avadhoot often gave him visions in which he would announce that a momentous event was about to take place soon. Little did the old man realize that it was an announcement of the coming of Sai Krishna—the eighth child of Eswaramma ! For Krishna, too, was the eighth one !

Sathya's birth had been preceded by regular rituals to please Lord Satyanarayana since the first signs of pregnancy. His mother undertook penances and fasts to please the Lord. For she had suffered four miscarriages earlier. At least the Lord was propitiated—thought Sathya's grandmother. And accordingly named the newborn child Sathya Narayan Raju. Lovingly everyone called him only Sathya as he grew up.

Another mysterious event associated with Sathya's birth was the appearance of a serpent underneath the newborn child's bed as he lay on the floor just after birth. Was it the serpent depicted as the couch of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology ? Who knows ! But the serpent disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared.

Sathya was a prodigy of course ! He was not irritable. Nor would he start howling on the slightest pretext like other children. His face was calm and serene. Even in infancy he would smile benignly at onlookers. He was the darling not only of the household but of the whole village. As he grew up, he was very conscious of his surroundings—avoiding places not conducive to good thoughts and actions. Eager to visit pious and religious homes he would not enter a household where the ways of the people were impious or wicked. Nor would he eat in non-vegetarian households.

One of his neighbours was a Karnam Brahmin. His wife Subbamma showered special love and favours of Sathya right from

his early childhood. Her pure maternal love was duly requited. For she was Yashoda to Sai Krishna who would often run away from his own home to eat out of the loving hands of Subamma. For Subamma it was who had been gifted with the vision that enabled her to see through the mortal coils the effulgence of divinity that Sathya was to reveal to the world many many years later ! Sathya was thus the darling love of Subamma as Krishna was to Yashoda.

Sathya's grandfather had renounced hearth and home and had taken to frugal living in a hut outside the village. Sathya loved to visit his grandfather and the old man too loved the little boy who never upset his pious routine of worship, Japa, Dhyana etc. but rather rejoiced in joining it himself. The old man felt uplifted in spirit as long as Sathya was there.

Even in his infancy and childhood Sathya never bothered his parents like other children by asking for toys, catables and other material objects. His mother recalled lovingly that he never pestered her for anything except giving alms to the poor and needy who came begging. Whenever his father visited some nearby town—say Hindupur or Anantpur—he would bring back clothes, sweets, toys etc. for the children in the family. On such occasions Sathya would never rush to grab what he fancied but would always forgo his chance so that others may choose first. He was not only satisfied but was happy in making others happy. He thrived—as he still does—on the love and joy of others.

Another peculiarity of boy Sathya bothered Eswaramma. Whenever he was at home he was all the time in a thoughtful mood and wore a far away look. What brought joy and delight to him was to roam about with his band of playmates in the lap of nature on the dry hills around the village or to play in the sandy basin of the river Chitravathi. His boyhood playmates loved him to no end and often talked of his distributing sugarcandy, etc. which he produced from nowhere. Such tales got no credence with the elders. He was considerate for and sensitive towards the feelings of his companions and come what may, never resorted to backbiting. For that might cause pain or injury to his friends and Sathya would rather suffer pain and injury himself than bring it upon others.

Not only that. He could not endure causing injury or pain to even birds or animals. Village urchins of Puttaparthi often rejoiced in and derived vicarious pleasure from teasing dogs and donkeys,

birds and bulls. But not in the company of Sathya. He would chide them for such mean acts towards their mute brethren. Or sometimes tempt them away to sugarcandy and sweets that he always seemed ready to give away. As he grew up, he would pontificate and preach upon spiritual topics with such sincerity and depth that it earned him the nickname of 'Guru' (Preceptor) or Brahmajñani (The Learned One). But more of that later.

As Sathya grew up the need to send him to school became more pressing. In those days there was only a primary school at Puttaparthi. Sathya, therefore, had his early education there. In no time he became the cynosure of his teachers' eyes. His classmates loved him to no end. For he would give away all sorts of things to them and share their pain and suffering. Learning too was child's play to the Learned One. He seemed to know the answers to all the questions.

Sathya sped through primary school and soon found himself at the upper-primary school at Bukkapattanam. As he grew up his compassion for all those whom he saw suffering also grew. He would give away provisions and clothes to the poor and needy. This trial annoyed the elders in the family. At Bukkapattanam school too he remained a wonderboy. His classmates loved to play with him and he on his part loved to teach and preach presenting examples of and telling his friends to be good, to see good, and to do good. Sathya had already shown his brilliance by standing first at the test conducted for the boys seeking admission to Bukkapattanam school.

Sathya brought fame and glory to the village. He had brought laurels and laurels were presented to him by the village folk in a grand send off. The small boy commanded not only love but admiration now. So the whole village encensed him in a bullock cart, heaped him up with flower garlands and took out a grand procession to see him off to his new school. Little did they know, then, that a time would come when their little Sathya would be showered with accolades, love and admiration by the whole universe! This little boy of Puttaparthi—the glorious Sai Krishna—was still a mere human to the simple 'maya'—engulfed folk of the sleepy unknown hamlet known by the name of Puttaparthi.

The travails of studying at Bukkapattanam were many. The village was a long way off to from Sathya's native village. So he had to leave home early to walk the distance. He carried his tiffin with

him for his midday meals. Apart from the difficulty of walking eight to ten kilometres a day he had to face urchins and bullies on his way to and from school. He had also to put up with the vagaries of weather. But the nine year old Sathya braved all odds patiently requiting his tormentors with unsullied love. The village bullies often coiled the neat and clear clothes of Sathya simply to spite him. But the forgiving boy never complained against them. The older boys sometimes pulled him through the muddy Chitravathi spoiling his clothes. But Sathya, through his conduct, endeavoured to teach them that selfishness gets and forgets whileas selflessness gives and forgives.

An incident that occurred during Sathya's stay at Bukkapattanam is recalled to throw light on the boy Sathya's conduct. One day his teacher asked a question in the class. None but Sathya could give the correct answer. So the teacher ordered that Sathya should slap each boy on his behalf. How could Sathya be so cruel ? So he let off his classmates lightly. So enraged was the teacher that he rained blows on Sathya to compensate for the compassion he had shown towards his companions.

From Bukkapattanam Sathya was shifted to the school at Kamlapuram. As this place was a long distance from Puttaparthi Sathya was accommodated at the house of the father-in-law of his brother Seshamma Raju. He always tried to be of service to his sister-in-law and the other members of her family—the same Sathya was to teach us later that service to man is service to God ; that Work is Worship and Duty is God. As the Learned One was only going through the motions of schooling he needed little time for his studies.

In Kamlapuram school, Sathya showed his prowess at games and sports too. Being service oriented the boy scout movement also benefited from him. Though he did not have the uniform required for boy scouts yet, somehow he participated in a scouting camp held at Pushpagiri and rendered useful service there. Pushpagiri was about 13-14 km from Kamlapuram. So the school charged twelve rupees per boy as expense for transport, board and lodging for the camp. Where was poor Sathya to get so much money from ? He would also not allow his friends to contribute for him. But all his companions longed for his presence. So he promised them that he would reach the place on his own. Sathya the Avatar, Sathya the Omnipotent.

tent One, the one who could not bear the suffering and pain of others, could not think of spending so much money on his own self. So he was left behind.

But lo and behold ! He was there on the day the camp began, rendered service for the three day duration of the camp and was as mysteriously back at school after the camp. On being questioned he said he had walked the distance. On his way he found a coin in the fields which came in handy to provide for his food during the camp. This same Sathya now tells us : No money is needed for service, only the desire to serve should be there. Just before this camp one of his rich friends expressed his desire to present him with the scouting uniform. The twelve year old boy wrote to his friend declining the offer and telling him that no uniform is needed for rendering service. Sathya also told his friends Ramesh that true friends should abjure from lending and borrowing for lending inflates the ego and borrowing throws the borrower into the torment of trying to repay the debt. True friendship, said Sathya, should be based on the bedrock of sincerity and not on money. What a hometruth from a mere boy of twelve ! Even today Baba teaches us that money decreases through spending while increases through giving.

From Kamlapuram Sathya moved on to Uravkonda along with his brother Sheshma Raju who joined as teacher at the Uravkonda High School. Sathya's fame as a precocious boy endowed with clairvoyance preceded him. Added to that was his basic goodness and gentleness. Consequently his teachers not only loved him but also held him in awe. Sathya commanded attention in his social circle too. Such was the spiritual strength of the thirteen year old boy that a band of devotees evolved round him. Kameshwaramma wife of his teacher Manchi Raju held him in great esteem to the point of worship. Sathya once gave her divine Dharshan of the ten Avatars, each one manifesting in all resplendence on the wall of the house. When the pageant reached the Narsimha (Man-lion) Avatar she took fright of the Avatar's mighty roar and as a result became deaf. Sathya, her preceptor, explained that it was best for her as her husband chided and scolded her so much that she could not have been able to endure it all had she heard all. This event and many others wherein Sathya revealed that he knew little known secrets of people's lives increased the steady stream of his devotees.

Even as a child Sathya loved singing, dancing, play-acting, etc. In his early childhood he had collected a band of urchins whom he

taught self-composed ditties of moral import. This group would also go round the village singing Bhajans and other devotional songs under Sathya's leadership. Even at the tender age of six or seven he composed naughty songs highlighting and satirizing the foibles of village elders. In whatever Sathya did—right from early childhood—he aimed at social reform. The special target of little Sathya was the village Karnam who kept two wives to satisfy his lust but misbehaved with innocent villagers out of sheer ego inflated by the sense of the power he thought he commanded. All day long he would sit twirling his large moustaches. But Sathya's band would go chanting ditties of his foibles time and again during the day. Such was the moral force that Sathya wielded that ultimately he had to bow before the urchins and do away with his pompous mother.

The targets of other songs of Sathya were the social evils of illiteracy, alcoholism, prostitution, ignorance, polygamy and exploitation of the poor. Sathya's band came to be called the Pandari Bhajan Group as every morning and evening they would go round the village singing Bhajans. Many of these were Sathya's own compositions. Such was the attraction and force of this little band that it was invited to nearby villages too, particularly during the onslaught of epidemics. Whenever Sathya went he rid people of physical and moral disease. In every action of the Avtar there is some inner meaning. Here was Sathya—little Sathya—trying to inculcate in the people a religious and moral way of life, reminding of the lesson of the Geeta in which the Lord has promised : 'Have total faith in me and I shall take upon myself the responsibility of your total welfare.' It was this Pandari Bhajan Group that was to spread out to the whole world and take the form of the Sathya Sai Organization in due course of time, beginning with the famous invocation of Uravakonda on the 20th of October. For it was on this day that Sathya renounced hearth and home on the call of his devotees worldwide, collected a small group in a garden and led them to sing the famous lines : 'Manas Bhaj Re Guru Charnam, Dustar Bhav Saagar Tarnam (Sing of the glory of the Lotus Feet, O moral man, for it is therein that lies salvation !). But of that, later.

At Kamalapuram Sathya faced financial hardships. And to overcome that he used his talent as composer singer. A local trader named Kotte Subayya befriended him and entrusted him with advertising his goods. Sathya accepted the offer as it brought in some money without causing harm to anyone. He composed lilting tunes

in Telgu that caught the imagination of the people and boosted the sales. Sathya was a good actor too. Once he played the role of Rishayendramani—a danceuse in a play. His role was so much admired that often he would be called upon to play female roles in play staged at religious and social ceremonies. He was gifted with life-like presentation of roles requiring expression of compassion or other tender emotions. The cosmic dance of Siva was forte. Here was Siva incarnate teaching his onlookers that all the world is a stage and we mere players who strut and fret our hour upon the stage and then are heard no more.

The Second World War had just begun. Indian freedom movement was also at its zenith. During those days some nationalists visited Eukkapa to spread the message of nationalism through the allegory of Harika Sathya was quick to lend a helping hand and came on the stage as a woman singing a lullaby to her infant. The song which is originally in Telgu is translated below :

*Wail not, O little one !
 For Thou art the son of Mother India
 If you continue to wail
 Who shall accept you as Indian ?
 Why do you cry ?
 Are you afraid of Hitler's might ?
 And the ravages he causes in Russia ?
 Do not be afraid !
 Russia shall triumph !
 Hitler shall commit suicide !
 Why do you cry, O little one ?
 Is it for India enslaved ?
 Do not cry my child !
 For soon, Mother India
 Shall be free, O little one !*

Little did the audience realize that little Sathya was fortelling the future ! For in his innocent composition he prophesied the defeat of Hitler in Russia, his subsequent suicide and India's freedom achieved in 1947.

As a student of Urvakonda school too Sathya continued to show prowess in the field of theatre. One of his teachers—Tammi Raju—asked him to present an original play. Sathya the social satirist composed and presented a play entitled 'Easier Said Than Done'. The play opens with the hero—a small boy—observing his mother

pontificating to her neighbours on the goodness of giving alms to the needy and poor. Just then a poor blind beggar comes to her door. But instead of alms he gets abuses from the little hero's mother. The second scene presents the little boy's father scolding him for asking for one rupee for his school fees. But no sooner does the boy leave than he happily gives twenty Rupees for a party to flatter his boss. The third scene presents a teacher expecting a visit of the Inspector of Schools. He is teaching his students about truthful Harishchandra and the virtues of truth. But he takes time off to warn his students of the Inspector's impending visit. He tells them that if the Inspector asks how many lessons have been taught their answer must be thirty two. The truth however is that only twenty three lessons have been covered. The little child is bewildered and puzzled by the actions of his parents and teacher and when the three are together, he innocently asks them what he should do. Such is the impact that the trio pledge to remove the gap between words and deeds in future.

The play was a tremendous success winning accolades from all and sundry. Once again Sathya was presenting a glimpse of his future form and mission. But how many could foresee the World-Preacher in Sathya clouded as their eyes were with the smoke of Maya ?

The play—in which Sathya himself played the role of the hero—was definitely the last important act of Sathya's human phase. For the time was fast drawing near when he was to announce his Avatarhood and renounce all bonds of family and clan. He was the Narayana, come in human form, to resurrect all mankind. For all mankind—nay all beings—form the finite family of the infinite !

The 7th of March, 1940 was marked by a bewildering occurrence. Sathya, while going about his brother Sheshamma Raju's house suddenly screamed, fainted and fell. As the area abounded in scorpions it was presumed that he had been stung by one. His condition worsened on the next day and his brother sent word to their parents in Puttaparthi. When Sathya had fainted the whole area had been searched. But no snake or scorpion was found. However, as Sathya's condition worsened his breathing became irregular, his face swollen, eyes red and lips puffed up. Local healers believed that it was the effect of the poison that had entered Sathya's system. Some believed it to be the handiwork of some spirit or goblin.

As time passed Sathya's condition began to cause concern. He was no more his normal self. Sometimes he would go into a trance and talk incoherently. At other times he would start reciting 'slokas' and other religious Sanskrit verses. Occasionally he would take to brooding for hours together. Offerings were made to placate various gods and goddesses. All available doctors and medical practitioners of sorts were consulted. But Sathya remained unaffected by physical and metaphysical cure. Day by day his conduct became more puzzling and inscrutable. Finally, Eswaramma and her husband returned to their native village alongwith Sathya in the fond hope that change of scene might do him some good. Efforts to exercise him however, continued.

In such cases usually, all sorts of people suggest all kinds of remedies. And so it was that someone suggested that Sathya be taken to an exorcist in Erahmanpalli, a village forty miles away from Puttaparthi. He was a famous (perhaps infamous) exorcist who would rid people of the ghost and goblins of the most obstinate kind. As it was a journey by bullock cart Sathya's parents were rather cold to the idea. But people around somehow persuaded them to undertake the journey. Sathya the compassionate one, Sathya the exemplar of goodness and kindness, was to silently suffer most brutal torture at the hands of this tormentor. Silently he suffered all, not to cure his own ills but to rid his innocent relatives and other village folk of the blind faith and superstition that was their malady.

The Exorcist of Brahmanpeth was tall, broad shouldered, with smouldering eyes—one who looked no less than a devil himself. He assured Sathya's parents that he would 'cure' Sathya completely provided family members did not interfere with his work. As a first step he took a cudgel and fell upon Sathya, beating him mercilessly to the tune of mysterious mumbo jambo. But that only tired him out. For Sathya, with his inborn divine powers, could endure all that and much more.

Sathya's torment continued, simply the modes changed. Noting with no success, he poured poisonous potions into his eyes which became red and inflamed. Many other prescriptions were tried. Finally, he shaved off Sathya's head, incised it with a razor and poured pangent lotions on to the wound. That was the limit. Though Sathya suffered mutely his parents declared that the exorcist

had failed and that they would have no more of him and his vile cures. So the whole caravan was back to Puttaparthi.

Once in his native village, Sathya resumed his mysterious ways. Only a few of his faithful followers stood by him and pleaded with all and sundry to leave Sathya alone for he was the Divine one. They would gather around Sathya, sing Bhajans and do his bidding. On top among them was Subamma who loved Sathya more than his own mother. She alone realized that Sathya was none but Narayana Himself. But Sathya's parents—bedevilled by Maya—worried about their son's welfare, thought he had become mentally deranged.

Exorcism having failed, someone in the family suggested a visit to the famed temple of Narsingh Avatar (The incarnation of God in the form of Man-Lion). As the suggestion came a well meaning educated person named Krishna-machari—who practised law at Penukonda—it was given due weight. He himself talked to Sathya on spiritual matters and was not astounded at the learning of this little boy that he declared him to be possessed and suggested that he be presented before Lord Narsingh in his temple at Ghatikachalam.

A learned lawyer was highly esteemed in villages those days. So, his opinion was very weighty. People started asking him to reach the place where the temple was situated. Then it was that Sathya burst into laughter and said : "My dear Krishnamachari ! Don't you know me --me the Narsingh whom you worship ? For who am I but the incarnation of Narsingh ? Don't you see the futility of trying to take me to my own temple ? What is it but duality to see me as different from God ?" But Sathya's declaration, far from being recognized as the truth, was considered only as another manifestation of his madness. And so the journey was undertaken.

In utter chagrin the learned lawyer left. But the incident enraged Sathya's father who believed his son had committed sacrilege by equating himself with God. Atonement, therefore, became necessary. It was now high time that this boy be exposed and brought to his senses.

An opportunity soon came by. It was Thursday—a day on which, each week, people had started gathering round Sathya to worship him as their preceptor. The believers had all gathered round Sathya on that fateful day the 23rd of May, 1940, singing Bhajans. At the end of the Bhajan session Sathya materialized

sugarcandy as Prasadam and distributed it among all those present. As the word of his miraculous powers went round, more and more people collected till the place was overflowing with the crowd. By now the village folk had witnessed so many miracles of Sathya that they had begun to believe that he was endowed with divine powers. Many had developed firm faith in his ability to solve their problems and to cure their diseases through the holy fragrant ash that he so effortlessly manifested for them.

The goings on this Thursday morning enraged Venkappa beyond limit. He took up a cudgel and decided to have it out with Sathya. The people around tried to stop him. Some said he should first wash his hands and feet before approaching the holy one. But Venkappa was raving mad with anger. Planting himself firmly before Sathya and threatening him with his cudgel Venkappa bawled : "What is all this nonsense ? Who are you ? Is this black magic that you practise ? Who taught you all this ?" In the face of such a tirade who could keep calm ? But Sathya was his usual calm and serene self. Venkappa continued : "Reveal yourself immediately or I will scatter your brains to pieces here and now !" Sathya smiled and said softly : "Why get agitated. I am Sai Baba." No one had heard of Sai Baba before. Who was this Baba which Sathya claimed to be. But Baba means a venerated saint. And such was the effect of this declaration that the staff slipped out of Venkappa's hands. He mumbled something to himself, and withdrew a few steps. Sathya continued : "Your ancestor Venkavdhoot prayed to me. So I have incarnated in answer to his prayers and the call of others. My mission is Dharma and welfare of the world ? Venkappa then asked : "What do you expect of us ?" And Sai Baba replied : "Keep your hearts and houses clean for I shall dwell in them ; worship me on Thursdays." Dumb founded in awe Venkappa went home and brooded for long on what to do next.

It spread like wildfire. By word of mouth everyone came to know that Sathya is Sai Baba come again. Someone mentioned this to a sub-registrar of Penukonda who was a devotee of some Sai Baba. He also held special Pooja, Bhajan, etc. on Thursdays. 'So it was decided to confront Sathya with him. He must know whether Sathya's declaration was genuine.

The sub-registrar grilled Sathya with questions all of which Sathya answered coolly but correctly. Yet still he refused to accept

Sathya as reincarnation of Sai Baba. Then it was Sathya's turn to say : "O dear devotee ! You are blinded by ego not to recognize the same Sai whom you have been worshipping all these years !" So saying he created the very Udi (holy ash) that was the hallmark of Sai Baba. But the fellow, blinded by illusion and delusion did not accept the holy ash and pronounced his judgement : This boy is mentally sick. Take him to some competent doctor !

Sathya's elder brother—the one who was teacher at Uravakonda—believed education to be the cure of all ills. He still hoped that if Sathya resumed his studies he would one day go on to get a good job. So he persuaded his parents to send Sathya to Uravakonda to resume his schooling. Sathya agreed with the proviso that he would be allowed to hold his weekly sessions on Thursdays. And so it was that Sathya returned to Uravakonda High School as a pupil of eighth standard in June 1940.

With redoubled joy and fervour his teachers, their families and all who knew him welcomed Sathya, their darling. They now called him Guru and the pact with family allowed him to indulge in his strange ways of holding Bhajans and religious congregations on Thursdays. His brother believed—on the basis of his brilliance—that Sathya could easily pass his exams if he devoted some time to his books.

Thursdays were now looked forward to by the devotees of Baal Sai (Boy Sai) for the soul soothing sessions of Bhajans, the miracles Sathya performed and for wish-fulfilment by many. The number of people gathering at Sheshma Raju's house began to swell week by week. Among the congregation were not only common folk but also well educated people holding high ranks. The headmaster of the school also attended along with his wife praying to Sai Baba, his pupil, with folded hands. There was also Anjaneyulu, the excise inspector. But there were doubters too. Among them were a few teachers of Uravakonda High School who were highly critical of their headmaster falling prey to superstition. Accordingly they hatched a plan to expose the bluff as they thought. In a group they approached him and said that they wished to ask a few questions. Sathya told them to shoot all the questions that they wished to they had, together and they showered him with a volley one after the other. When they had all finished Sathya answered each question removing the doubts of all of them. Dumbfounded by Sathya's divine performance they were silenced for good.

Recapitulating those days of Uravakonda Baba, in his discourse on the 20th of October 1990, revealed : "There was a Headmaster named Lakshmipathi. He used to summon me to his office as soon as I came to the school. This kind of feeling does not come to everyone. Only those who have been blessed by their good deeds in previous lives have such feelings. As soon as I went into his office, he would close the door. He would ask me to sit in his chair. He would sit on the floor and start massaging my feet. Innocently, I would tell him often : 'Sir, you should not do such a thing. Lakshmipathi used to say : 'You don't know these things. I know them. There is a great sakthi (power) in you.'"

Then, there was Anjaneyula, the excise inspector. "He was one of those who on seeing Swami felt a kind of spiritual urge. His house was on the way to my house. He used to prepare some edibles and wait, together with his wife, for my arrival. They would send their children inside lest they should form some impressions about the parents. As soon as I entered the house, both of them would hold my feet. I used to tell them often : 'Sir, you are an elder. You should not touch my feet.' He would reply : 'Raju, we may appear elders in terms of the body. But in terms of wisdom, we are very small. You are verily Krishna himself.' They used to describe me like this. They would do it in great privacy, lest others should scoff at them."

Thus went by about four months before the catalytic moment arrived. It was the 20th of October, 1940. Sathya went to school as usual. But his sister-in-law was amazed to see him back so early. Before she could ask for an explanation Sathya flung his books in a corner and declared : 'No more do I belong to you now : The time had come for me to break all bonds of family and home. My mission awaits me. My devotees are calling and I must go !' So saying Sathya left home. A panic stricken sister-in-law Susilamma sent word to her husband Seshamma Raju who came rushing. In vain did he try to persuade Sathya to return home. For Sathya had now become Sathya Sai Baba who belonged to all and had broken off all ties with hearth and home. In the precincts of the garden Anjaneyulu, the excise inspector, on a huge stone, sat our beloved Sri Sathya Sai and led his devotees tunefully through his first memorable message in the form of the now famous Bhajan :

*Manasa Bhaj Re Guru Charanam**Dustar Bhav Sagar Taranam*

(Meditate upon the Lotus Feet of the Lord Preceptor and then shalt thou rid of the painful cycle of birth and death, crossing the sea of life with equanimity) That was the momentous declaration of his Avatharhood ! Word spread like wildfire that Sai Baba had recounced home and taken up abode in an Aashram. It brought people running, falling head over heels in an effort to offer obeisance to Sathya Sai. Many were reminded of Sai Rama staying for a short while in Nishad Raj's Aashram. Afraid that Sathya might go away some where else—like Rama did—they could not bear to lose sight of him. So Bhajans and devotional songs continued late into the night and were resumed early in the morning with incense burning and flowers being offered by those who came. Among the visitors were Seahama Raju and his wife who tried in vain to persuade him to return home, "When I made this declaration," Says Baba, "The families of Thammiraju Hanumantha Rao, Bhojraju and Sheshamraju, all with one voice declared themselves against my leaving."

Exasperated, Seshama Raju sent an urgent call to his parents to come immediately. As they entered the precincts of the village Sathya said to the congregation around : 'Maya is coming.' And sure enough soon she entered the garden with Venkappa. As she saw Sathya Sai she started wailing, railing at him. Emotionally overwhelmed, she put incoherent questions to Baba : Would he leave his parents ? Would he become a mendicant ? Where would he go ? Why was he bringing such misery and humiliation upon his parents ? Would he don the ochre robes ? These, and many other questions failed to affect Sathya Sai for he was no more a son, a brother, or anything but Sai Baba. No amount of tears could make him renounce his mission. The mother had brought food for him. Sathya accepted only three morsels from her, symbolic of renunciation.

All efforts to change Sathya Sai Baba's resolve failed. The most the mother was able to achieve was to extract a promise from their estranged son—that he would make their native village of Puttaparthi the centre of his activities and mission. Baba agreed but warned that this was a commitment to the native land, not to the family. He would—he said—make Puttaparthi his Kurukshetra (field of action). Bidding the mother and father to go back he told them he would be back in Puttaparthi coming Thursday.

'Baba Sai is going away,' the word spread like wild fire. The effect was electric. People who had only heard of his miraculous powers came rushing; for it was their last chance to have darshan. Many came just out of curiosity. But all told it added to the stream of visitors to Anganeyulu's garden. The teachers and students of Uravakonda came in groups, downcast at the sad prospect of parting from their beloved Sathya. Doubts afflicted them : Would they get the same affection and regard from him ? For he was no more the Sathya who belonged to them ! Baba allayed their fears. Said he : 'Why fear when I am here ? Come to me whenever in trouble. Bring all your problems to me, for, not one of you is a stranger to me.' It consoled them for a while. But the thought of his going away brought back tears to their eyes.

For three days the school remained deserted. For everyone was paying attendance to the world teacher. So overwhelmed was Kameswaramma, wife of the headmaster, that she took to fasting. No amount of consolation could make her regain her lost appetite. At last, on the third day of her fast Baba himself offered her food, eating out of her hands and feeding her in turn. Was it Sabari reborn, offering morsels of love to her Sai Rama ? Who could tell ?


The appointed day arrived all too soon. Sai Baba had to leave for Puttaparthi. The path of Sai Rama was well cleaned and decorated. It was festooned with flowers. On both sides stood people full hearts, tears of love welling up into their eyes. The bullock cart in which he was to travel was decorated too. It was artistically decked with flowers. For was it not the chariot in which Sai Krishna was to travel ? In emotional turmoil, too, the scene was the same as when Krishna parted from his companions. The bullocks that were to draw the cart were also bedecked with flowers and Kumkum.

The moment to leave arrived. Baba rode the chariot. The whole town was there to bid farewell like it was when Rama took exile. Seshama Raju and Jaanaki Rama (younger brother of Sathya) started on foot as escorts. The bullock cart was followed by men and women, among them Eswaramma and her daughters. Slowly the cart ambled along with Sai Baba showering benedictions, palm upraised in the act of blessing. There was Kameshwarama too, unable to control her feelings at the parting. Suddenly the whole equation had changed. From son, student, pupil, boy Sathya had

become the Guru, Preceptor, Father, and Teacher. On what a change. The whole procession was preceded by a band, playing music. And a group of youngmen were maintaining order.

Slowly the procession meandered along. But the precincts of the village were reached all too soon. Not one of the crowd wanted to go back. Sai it was who told them, to return to their hearths and homes that required their dutiful attendance. And just as Rama sent back all, so did Sai, lovingly, telling them that all of them would reside in his heart and too should install him in their hearts. He would thus never be far way from them. The cart moved on, diminishing in size to the vision of those left behind, a speck on the horizon, and then disappearing altogether.

On the 23rd of Oct, 1940 the class teacher of ninth class in Uravakonda school drew a long line after the name of a pupil adding the comment : 'left school without obtaining T. C.' "The day after I left, another boy went up to the platform in the school for prayer. He started to pray, but broke down in tears. He remembered Swami and could not continue. When he started crying, everyone in the hall began to cry. The prayer turned into a lamentation. The Headmaster said : "There is no need for a prayer. The cry itself is the prayer. From that day, the prayer-room was locked up and was later converted into a sacred showroom." (Baba's Discourse—20-10-90). The mission had begun; there was so much to be done ; promises to keep, for the Divine One !



Baala Sai : The First Phase

Slowly the cart carrying Sathya Sai wended its way up and down the undulating landscape on its way to Puttaparthi. The scene and mood in the village was in direct contrast with that in the cart. Eswaramma and her kin huddled together sat in sombre silence brooding over events now beyond their control. Puttaparthi was eagerly waiting for the return of Sathya Sai. It was like Rama coming back to Ayodhya after his years in exile. The village was decked and festooned. People had come out in all their fineries. A small band was waiting to herald his arrival with music. Subbama's heart was aflutter. Love was overflowing to the brim. Many doubted whether Sathya Sai Baba would acknowledge them. But not for a moment did Subbamma's heart give place to doubt. How could Yashoda have doubts about her own Sai Krishna ? She had cleaned and decorated her house in welcome of Sai Baba. A room had been set apart for him. No sooner did the cart reach Puttaparthi than Sathya dismounted and went straight to Subbamma's house. He took abode in the room marked for him and Subbamma got busy providing for the needs of all those who had undertaken the journey.

Eswaramma was eager to take Sathya Sai 'home'. Baba did condescend to go but soon slipped away from there to his sister's house. There too he did not stay for long and finally took up abode in the quarters designated by Subbamma for him. There it was that congregations began to be held till finally the New Temple in Prasanthi Nilayam was constructed. The tin shed of yore is now known as the Old Temple. Subbamma used to look after the needs of Sathya Sai and his devotee pilgrims with great love and tender care. Extensions to the original old structure were made with the passage of time till it was no longer adequate to accomodate the stream of devotees that expanded day by day.

The name Satyanarayana Raju soon changed to Sathya Sai Baba or Baala Sai. Fragrance spread far and wide and brought in

pilgrims from distant corners. The soul-purifying sessions of Bhajan became a daily routine performed morning and evening. The native villagers and the devotees from other parts of India all joined to sing the glory of the Lord. Puttaparthi of those days was not at all easily accessible. The nearest railway station was more than twenty miles away. And no bus came that way. Moreover, there was river Chitravathi to contend with making the journey all the more arduous. The only mode of transport was a bullock cart and the waters of Chitravathi often impeded the journey. Normally twenty to thirty pilgrims would reach there daily. Their number was slightly higher on Thursdays. The duty of catering to their needs of stay, food and water was the willing responsibility of Subbamma who never allowed fatigue to sour her temper. Her faith in and surrender to Sathya Sai was total. For she knew well that she was serving none but God Himself who had incarnated as Sathya Sai. And this realization made her work a labour of love. And Sai Love gave her the energy and the means to handle all the chores of the growing Sai family. Her husband had already merged in his Maker in 1939. Many relatives had also gone the way to dusty death. But the brilliance of the lamp of her faith never diminished.

Subbamma, in fact, was the first person to have realized the divinity of Sathya Sai. Her good Karma of the past, her pure heart and sincere feelings, her love for truth and service, were the qualities, perhaps, that endeared her to Sai right from his earliest years. She was dearer to him than the mother who had borne the pangs of birth.

The evenings were generally spent on the sands of Chitravathi. Sai Krishna would walk to the banks of the river, followed by his devotees. Bhajan sessions would follow culminating in some miracle performed by Baala Sai. He would sometimes manifest sugarcandy out of sheer sand as Prasaadam to be distributed after Bhajans. At other times he would pile up sand, draw a sketch over it with his finger, and then dig out the icon of some deity—say Ganesh or Durga or Siva, Krishna, Rama. These he invariably gave away to devotees, mostly to those afflicted by sorrow caused by adverse circumstances. It would make them infinitely happy and confident of overcoming their crises. Only a few were so blessed, but the very sight of such miracles invigorated, inspired and filled with bliss all those who were present. They went back home, narrated the divine performances to others and more and more came eager to witness for themselves the divine phenomena.

Just beside Chitravathi is a small hillock on which a tamarind tree stands to this day. This tree was also the subject of many miracles performed by Baala Sai. He would exhort everyone to run up the hillock and before they could climb up half the distance they would see him standing near the tree, laughing. As they reached him panting, he would show infinite concern for their fatigue and would ask them what fruit they would like to eat. Devotees would think of various fruits and all of them would suddenly materialize hanging from the branches of the tamarind tree—guavas, oranges, mangoes, all picked from the same tree. Naturally, the tree came to be known as Kalpavriksha or the wish-fulfilling tree—a name that it bears to this day.

It was usual practice for Baba those days to talk about his previous incarnation as Sai Baba of Shirdi. It was natural that the curiosity of devotees was aroused. One day Baba asked Subbamma, his parents, and a lawyer who was present, whether they would like to see the Samadhi of Shirdi Sai. When they replied in the affirmative Baba took them to a room and asked them to look through the window one by one. They were enthralled at what they saw. There was the Samadhi of Shirdi Sai with a devotee sitting in front. The Samadhi was laden with flowers and incense was burning. Nearby stood the Hanuman temple which is very much there at Shirdi. And each one of them saw the same vision separately. Such incidents helped the people realize the truth of Sathya Sai's claim of being reincarnation of Shirdi Sai.

Most of the people who visited Sathya Sai those days came hoping for cures for incurable diseases. For, somehow, word had got round that whoever could obtain Baba's grace would be cured, whatever the nature and duration of his malaise. A few came seeking solutions to their individual or family problems. Only a very small number came drawn by some spiritual quest. Such people thought their religious quest would attain fulfilment if Baba gave them icons of deities materialized by him. Or even if they could see Baba's miracles they felt spiritual bliss. Whatever the purpose or motive of the visit, Baala Sai knew in each case without being told. Usually it was he who accosted the visitors with their problems or narrated their past Karma to them chiding lovingly for the same. He would materialize Vibhuti to cure physical ills or procure a Rudraksha rosary for the spiritual practices of someone. Problems were solved and protection provided. Day by day the number increased.

Among the visitors also came people with the intention of calling off the bluff. For they believed that Sathya Sai was simply cheating gullible people by sleight of hand. They came, they stayed for long periods, observed and were ultimately transformed from agnostics into devout devotees. People adopted various means of testing the genuineness of Baba. Five young men once approached him and made a request to go to the banks of Chitravathi. Knowing full well what was latent in their monkey minds Baba gladly accompanied them and told them to choose the spot where they would like to sit. Once there, they requested Baba for a mango as they knew it was impossible to get one out of season. Baba told them to dig the sand in front of them, And out came a large ripe mango. The five fell at Baba's feet out of shame and remorse that they had intended to test Baba.

There was a woman at Puttaparthi who too hated Sathya Sai. So one day she invited Baba to have food at her house. Baba knew what was in store but still went there only to be served poisoned Vadas. He prevented others from eating the same but himself ate with relish. On return he vomited and told his companions that the lady would be disappointed on discovering that he did not drop dead. Next day, on seeing Baba alive, the woman fell at his feet tears running down her cheeks. Baba lovingly told her to get up and give up the feeling of guilt. Later Baba often visited her and whenever she offered him Vadas he would jokingly ask 'Special Vadaas, are they ?'

Many a time did people try to kill Sathya Sai. Not only did they warn all those who came flocking to Puttaparthi but also tried to 'correct' Baba. Once, out of jealousy, they set fire to the room he was sleeping in. As the flames rose, down came rain in torrents dousing them out. But Baba always forgave such vandalism for he is Love, and Love, and Love.

By and by people from far and wide started coming to pay homage to Baba. Kings and commoners, rich and poor, doctors and lawyers, in fact people from all walks of life were among them. Most often they urged Baba to visit and bless their homes and native towns. Baba could not reject such entreaties of love. Thus started his journeys to such far off places as Trichrapally, Madras, Bombay, Hyderabad, and of course Bangalore. Wherever he went he conquered the hearts of people with his love, compassion and divine performance. As long as people from nearly villages were the visitors

Eswaramma did not worry. But as people in flashy motor cars started coming and as the frequency of Baba's journeys with these people increased, she was alarmed. These people would rob her son of his simplicity and humility, thought she ; he would be led astray by these bespoilt city dwellers. He might be charmed by the glitter of riches and decide to settle somewhere far away from Puttaparthi.

The growing concern of the mother was shared by other members of the family. Worried the most was Seshama Raju the eldest son of Eswaramma. He was a teacher and as such he deemed it to be his duty to warn his brother of the snares that lay in his path. Riches and desire for fame often lead to downfall. So Seshama Raju wrote a long letter to Baba drawing attention to the traps that lay along the road to righteousness. He also expressed his displeasure at Baba's tendency to perform all sorts of miracles. The letter flowed out of the heartfelt love that a brother has for another and whose welfare is his concern. Unable to comprehend Baba's divinity, he was simply worried about his welfare. The future generations, however, are deeply indebted to Seshama Raju. For it was the reply to his letter that has since become the historic charter of Baba's mission and message.

Baba received his brother's letter. His reply dated 25th of May, 1947 is the first announcement of what was to follow. Given below is Baba's letter. Wrote he :

"My Dear one ! I received the communication that you wrote and sent ; I found in it the surging flood of your devotion and affection, with the undercurrents of doubts and anxiety. Let me tell you that it is impossible to plumb the hearts and discover the natures of jnanis, yogis, ascetics, saints, sages and the like. People are endowed with a variety of characteristics and mental attitudes; so, each one judges according to his own angle, talks and argues in the light of his own nature. But we have to stick to our own right path, our own wisdom, our own resolution without getting affected by popular appraisal. As the proverb says, it is only the fruit-laden tree that receives the shower of stones from passers-by. The good always provoke the bad into calumny; the bad, always provoke the good into derision. This is the nature of this world. One must be surprised if such things do not happen.

"The people, too, have to be pitied rather than condemned. They do not know. They have no patience to judge aright. They are too full of lust, anger and conceit to see clearly and know fully.

So, they write all manner of things. If they only know, they would not talk or write like that. We, too, should not attach any value to such comments and take them to heart, as you seem to do. Truth will certainly triumph some day. Untruth can never win. Untruth might appear to overpower Truth, but its victory will fade away and truth will establish itself.

“It is not the way of the great to swell when people offer worship, and shrink when people scoff. As a matter of fact no sacred text lays down rules to regulate the lives of the great, prescribing the habits and attitudes that they must adopt. They themselves know the path they must tread; their wisdom regulates and makes their acts holy. Self-reliance; beneficial activity—these two are their special marks. They may also be engaged in the promotion of the welfare of devotees and in allotting them the fruits of their actions. Why should you be affected by tangle and worry, so long as I am adhering to these two? After all, the praise and blame of the populace do not touch the Atma, the reality, they can touch only the outer physical frame.

“I have a ‘Task’ : To foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of Ananda. I have a ‘Vow’ : To lead all who stray away from the straight path, again into goodness and save them. I am attached to a ‘Work’ that I love : To remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack. I have a reason to be proud for, I rescue all who worship and adore Me, aright. I have my definition of the Devotion I expect : Those devoted to Me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude. This means that I will never give up those who attach themselves to Me. When I am thus engaged in My beneficial task, how can My name be ever tarnished, as you apprehend? I would advise you not to heed such absurd talk. Mahatmas do not acquire greatness through someone calling them so; they do not become small, when someone calls them small. Only those low ones who revel in opium and ganja but claim to be unexcelled Yogis, only those who quote scriptural texts to justify their gourmandry and pride, only those who are dry-as-dust scholars exulting in their casuistry and argumentative skill, will be moved by praise or blame.

“You must have read life-stories of saints and Divine personages; in those books, you must have read of even worse false-hoods and more heinous imputations cast against them. This is the lot of Mahatmas, everywhere, at all times. Why, then, do you take these

things so much to heart ? Have you not heard of dogs that howl at the stars ? How long can they go on ? Authenticity will soon win.

“I will not give up My Mission or My determination. I know I will carry them out. I treat the honour and dishonour, the fame and blame that may be the consequence, with equal equanimity. Internally, I am unconcerned. I act but in the outer world; I talk and move about for the sake of the outer world and for announcing My coming to the people; else, I have no concern even with these.

“I do not belong to any place ; I am not attached to any name. I have no ‘mine’ or ‘thine’. I answer whatever the name you use. I go wherever I am taken. This is My very first vow. I have not disclosed this to anyone so far. For Me the world is somethings afar, apart. I act and move only for the sake of mankind. No one can comprehend My Glory. whoever he is, whatever his method of enquiry, however long his attempt.

“You can yourself see the full Glory in the coming years. Devotees must have patience and forbearance.

“I am not concerned nor am I anxious that these facts should be made known; I have no need to write these words; I wrote them, because, I felt you will be pained if I do not reply. Thus, your Baba.” What a prophecy ! And what a declaration at the age of just twentyone !



Phase Two : Prasanthi Nilayam

More and more people began to be drawn to Puttaparthi. It now became well nigh impossible for them to be accommodated in the small courtyard in front of the tin-shed built by Subamma. As Baba's mission expanded it became evident that the area needed for his work must also expand. The years 1947-50 were important years. It was in 1947 that Baba brought into his fold N. Kasturi who was later on to serve him as secretary for forty years, but, most important of all, who meticulously maintained diaries and documented daily occurrences little realizing that these would come in handy, later on, for writing the most authentic four-part biography of Sathya Sai : namely 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram'.

The crowd that collected to celebrate Baba's birthday in 1947 was really amazing. The need to regulate the visitors was deeply felt, later on leading to the evolution of Seva Dal. It was also realized that Subamma's shed could no longer hold the growing numbers. So, the devotees present decided to construct a new Ashram and living quarters for Sai Baba and his followers. But this daunting task could not succeed in such a remote place without Baba's blessings. So they went to him with their proposal. Baba readily blessed them. Thus began construction of what later on was christened as Prasanthi Nilayam—Abode of Peace—by Baba.

23rd of November, 1950 was the 25th Birthday of Baba. It was on this momentous day that the holy ceremony of housewarming was performed and Baba taken out in a palanquin to occupy his new abode. The palanquin was hoisted on the shoulders of devotees and decorated with flowers and garlands. A band played music escorting the divine procession. On both sides of the path stood thousands of men, women and children watching the glorious spectacle showering flower petals. A beaming Baba showered the devotees with flowers. But as the flowers fell to the ground or landed in the palms of people they changed into silver medallions. On one side

of these was embossed the form of Shirdi Sai or Sathya Sai and on the other were the words : 'Why fear when I am here'. Among the lucky ones was Prof. N. Kasturi who cherished the memento and memories till he breathed his last.

Over the last forty years Prasanthi Nilayam campus has seen considerable development. To begin with there was the Bhajan Mandir and a few living quarters. The Mandir was flat roofed and looked very much like a house till 1975 i.e. the fiftieth birthday of Baba. Between 1975 and 1976 it was reshaped as a temple with domes and spires and carvings of Dashavtar (The ten incarnations) on the inner walls and pillars of the central hall. A huge statue of Krishna as Arjun's charioteer also adorns the central hall. Construction activity has in fact never ceased since 1950.

Prasanthi Nilayam complex has developed over the years into a self-contained township. Today there are hundreds of flats for devotees and visitors, scores of huge sheds which can accomodate thousands of devotees, and several rotundas meant to accomodate overseas devotees. The main attraction, however, is the Poorna Chandra hall which can accomodate more than ten thousand devotees at a time. This hall is used on festival days when the gathering is large. However, on the sixtieth birthday of Baba the number of devotees touched the five lakh figure and the Hill-View Stadium was constructed to accomodate all. As these lines are being written arrangements to celebrate Baba's 65th birthday are on and food and accomodation for ten lakh devotees is to be planned and provided.

There is a lecture hall in which some learned person delivers a discourse occasionally. A large book-store stocks books on and by Baba. There are about a dozen shops selling household goods, provisions etc. And then there is the canteen managed by devotees which caters breakfast and meals to thousands of devotees at very reasonable rates daily. Not only is the food cooked in clean and hygienic surroundings but the whole area is always kept clean and absolute peace and quiet is maintained howsoever large the number of devotees staying there.

Just behind the Bhajan Mandir in which Baba lives also is a hospital on a hillock. The hospital is equipped with modern facilities and devotee-doctors render service there. A road up the hillock leads to the beautiful building that charms people with its structural grandeur as they enter the precincts of the village. This

is the administrative block of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning which has been accorded the status of a deemed University. As we leave the precincts of Prasanthi Nilayam and walk down the road we come by Eswaramma High School, The Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and the boy's hostel. There is a large dairy with hundreds of beautiful healthy cows that provide milk for the daily needs of the devotees and others. All the institutions are run by the Sathya Sai Trust. All the development is the result of Baba's loving care and planning. The sleepy village of Puttaparthi is still there but Prasanthi Nilayam has its own identity and hence was recognized as a town area by the Govt. in 1967. The influx of devotees has brought prosperity to the local inhabitants too which is evidenced by the fact that there are about half a dozen Bank branches in the village.

In Nilayam the day for the devotees dawns around four a. m. After a quick bath they quietly go round the temple-complex and take their seats inside the Bhajan Hall. At four thirty the whole campus comes alive to the reverberations of the chanting of Omkar twenty-one times. Then follows Suprabhatam—the hymn to awaken the Lord. At five they all file out of the hall and quietly form three separate groups. The first consists of Vedic scholars who chant Vedic hymns in unison while going round Nilayam. They are followed by women singing Bhajans performing what is called Nagar Sankirtan. The men's group singing Bhajans comes last. After going round the Temple they all disperse as quietly as they had assembled. Not a sound disturbs the morning serenity. Devotees disperse around six o'clock for breakfast, tea etc.

In front of the Bhajan Mandir are two large courtyards. Since early morning the resident-devotees take up brooms to sweep and clean up these courtyards where gravel is the carpet. Around seven in the morning devotees start coming in to take their seats in neat rows of men and women in their respective courtyards separately. The discipline of the Aashram ordains no mixing of any kind among men and women. Gents and ladies Seva Dal volunteers are already there to guide the devotees. By seven thirty many rows are formed on either side. Then one by one they are given tokens by random generation of numbers. The number on the token decides the place of each row in the inner courtyard. Thus the last row in the outer courtyard has an equal chance of getting token number one and thus being the first row in the inner courtyard. After the numbers


are allotted the rows move into the inner courtyard in numerical order and the devotees take their place inside. No one talks, no one grumbles, not a sound is heard except the cawing of crows. By 7.45 every one is eagerly looking towards the right side door of the Mandir from where Baba is to emerge any minute. In the hushed silence even the beating of the hearts can be heard.

Around eight o'clock Baba emerges. The whole crowd is electrified and thousands of folded hands pray to him in silent welcome. Gracefully he walks through the neatly formed rows of students and teachers sitting in the verandah of the Mandir. Then he walks out towards the ladies' square. His divine form moves in front of them blessing all those present. Occasionally he stops to talk to someone, be pat a child, to collect letters held out to him and to materialize Vibhuti for the sick or the blessed. Selecting a few for personal interview he moves on towards the men's enclosure and does the same there. By the time Darshan is over—it usually takes ten to fifteen minutes—the fifteen to twenty people who have been granted interview walk over to the parapet in front of the door from where Baba emerged. Baba returns, goes inside to keep away the letters, comes back and escorts the lucky ones to the interview room. The door closes and devotees quietly disperse, only some staying on to attend Bhajans in the Bhajan Hall. But the Bhajans begin only at nine and continue till nine thirty. By that time Baba is also free from the interviews and comes to the Bhajan hall, sits there in his chair and blissfully blesses the devotees by his benign presence. With the Bhajan the morning routine of the devotees is over.

The afternoon routine is similar and begins around four o'clock. Baba comes out for Darshan at about five and again selects about 15 to 20 people for personal interview. Evening Bhajans are held from six to six thirty. It must be mentioned that except for sitting with the devotees there is no other way of obtaining an interview. For no one, not even Baba's personal secretary or the students attending on him, can 'arrange' an interview with Baba.

Apart from the daily routine a few festivals are also celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam on a grand scale. These are Guru Poornima, Dussehra, Baba's Birthday and Christmas. Thousands of devotees gather on these occasions. The annual convocation of the Institute of Higher Learning is held so as to coincide with Baba's Birthday. Thousands of overseas devotees gather every year on Christmas and

perform plays etc. based on stories from the Bible. They also sing carols and hymns and make it a truly memorable occasion. Baba has also constructed a mosque in Puttaparthi for the Musiims. The quintessence of Sai teachings is unity of faiths and respect for all religions. There is a predominance of Sarva Dharma Bhajans among those sung in Sai Centres. Among Baba's devotees there are not only Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, Parsis but also Muslims. Recently people from communists countries have also been drawn to him. He defines communists as come-you-next.



Sai Siva and Sivananda

The Divine Life Society is a very well known spiritual organization having its headquarters in Rishikesh in the Himalayas. The founder of this society was Swami Sivananda—a yogi, a saint and a spiritual phenomenon who wrote many books and booklets on the various aspects and practices of spiritualism. The Divine Life Society has its branches in many towns of India as well as all over the world and is held in high esteem everywhere. The meeting of Sathya Sai Baba with Swami Sivananda in 1957 was the confluence of the Ganga Kaveri—the north and the south.

The ninth annual conference of the Tamil Nadu branch of Divine Life Society was to be held in Venkatgiri under the guidance of Swami Sadananda and Satchitananda—both disciples of Swami Sivananda. The local members of the Divine Life Society, however, invited Sathya Sai Baba to be the President of the conference without consulting Swami Satchitananda. The Swami did not like the idea at all as on the basis of whatever he knew of Baba he considered him to be a man of miracles which was taboo according to the beliefs of his sect. Moreover, he considered Baba to be unlettered, with knowledge of Telgu only, while as members of the Society were learned scholars of Sanskrit and English. Baba, at the age of thirtyone years, was also considered by him to be too young for any spiritual attainments. Satchitananda was anxious to preserve the status and dignity of the Society and could not allow an erosion in them. However, he did not oppose Baba, thinking it would be only fair to first meet Baba and thus get a first hand, impression. Another perturbing development was that some people published and distributed pamphlets against Baba.

Somehow it was not possible to change the President and the conference began. But when Baba delivered his discourse the whole gathering was astounded at his knowledge of the Vedas, Sastras and

other spiritual classics. Not only did Baba win their hearts with his simple thesis of Truth and Love. Love is God, he said, so live in love. The way he expounded and beamed divine love made a lasting impact on the Sanyasins of the Society. The cobwebs of suspicion were gone.

On this occasion Baba gave personal interviews too. He recalled all the important events of the past from the life of Swami Satchitananda, told him all about his spiritual progress, and guided him on how to advance further. He recounted an event from Satchitananda's life that had occurred thirtyseven years earlier—at a time when Sathya was not even born. On being questioned how he knew of an event much before his birth Baba simply asked: "Am I born? Do I die? Does birth and death affect me." Thus he gave an indication of his cosmic form beyond the limitations of time and place. After the conclusion of the conference both Swami Sutchitananda and Sadananda accompanied Baba to Prasanthi Nilayam where they were Baba's guests for about a week. During this period what they saw and observed convinced them that Baba was no ordinary human being. He was indeed—they were convinced—an incarnation of Siva and Ananda (Bliss) was his form.

When both the Swamis of The Divine Life Society were fully convinced of Baba's divinity they wrote in detail to their preceptor Swami Sivananda. Sivananda was very sick during those days but a deep longing for a meeting with Baba gripped him. He sent a fervent invitation to Baba to visit Rishikesh and Baba accepted his invitation. Thus commenced his journey to Rishikesh. Baba left Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th of July, 1957 and after a brief stop over at Delhi reached Rishikesh on the 22nd of July. The thirtyone year old Baba was accorded a very hearty welcome by the seventy year old saint and Yogi Sivananda and his disciples. There was an instant rapport of souls and Baba blessed Swami Sivananda. He stayed there for four or five days, delivered discourses, and provided guidance to the many spiritual seekers there. Baba materIALIZED a rosary of 108 Rudraksha beads on a string of gold and gave it to Swami Sivananda. He also materIALIZED Vibhuti, smeared the Swami's forehead with it and gave it to him to eat.

Baba and Sivananda conversed for about an hour daily. Vibhuti brought about quick improvement in Sivananda's health. When Baba had arrived the Swami was confined to the wheel chair.

Baba's grace healed him so quickly that within four or five days he could walk about without help and could even ascend the steps leading up the Aashram.

Baba left Rishikesh on 26th of July. On his way back he stopped at a cave known as Vasistha Cave and leaving his retinue behind entered the cave alone. He came back after quite some time and the caravan proceeded on its journey forward. Much later Baba told why he had stopped there. He said that an eighty year old yogi—Purshottamananda—was in deep meditation for thirty years in that cave. His Guru had ordained this path so he had not moved out of the cave even once. Baba had known all this through his divine powers and had gone in to give him a vision of the cosmic form of the Lord in fulfilment of his spiritual effort. And he had left Purshottamananda in a state of bliss. Many other miracles were performed by Baba during this first journey to north India. The conquest had just begun.



There are only three ways of saving oneself—Pravrithi, Nivrithi and Prapatti. Pravrithi (Action, External Action) is a method of sublimating the instincts and impulses. Nivrithe (Detachment, internal quiet) is a method of subduing the thirst of the senses and of the ego. Prapatti (Surrender) is a method of utilizing the senses, the instincts and impulses, the intelligence, the emotions, for the glorification of the all-knowing, the all directing Divine. Do and dedicate, work and worship, plan and protect, but do not worry about the fruit. That is the secret of spiritual success.

—BABA (From Sathya Sai Speaks : Vol. VI)

The Mission

Quite early in his life Baba declared his action plan. He said that the first sixteen years of his life were years wherein 'leelas' or miracles would predominate. The next sixteen years were to be years of 'Mahima' wherein his name and fame would spread far and wide. Thereafter the thrust would be on reform and righteousness for which his chief weapon would be discourses. Accordingly, he began his mission in his thirty second year. In 1957 Sanatana Saarathi the official magazine was launched from Prasanthi Nilayam with N. Kasturi as its editor. To begin with Sanatana Sarathi was published in English and Telgu only. Today, apart from the above two, it has Tamil, Malyalam, Kannada, Marathi, Gujrati, Bengali and Hindi editions too. It carries mainly the discourses delivered by Baba from time to time and is thus a medium of disseminating Baba's teachings through millions of people. It also serialized Baba's elucidation of various religious topics which were later on compiled in the form of books such as Rama Katha Ras Vahini, Geeta Vahini, Bhagvatha Vahini, etc. Many other books of Baba were serialized through Sanathana Sarathi. Some of them are: Dharma Vahini, Dhyana Vahini, Jnana Vahini, Prasanthi Vahini, Sathya Vahini, Prema Vahini, Upnishada Vahini and Sandeha Nivarini. The last one is in question answer form and deals with doubts that commonly beset pilgrims on the path of spirituality.

Apart from the books Baba's discourses were faithfully compiled and published by Prof N. Kasturi in twelve volumes titled 'Sathya Sai Speaks'. Vernacular translations of the same are also available. They are a storehouse of knowledge on the religious, spiritual and cultural heritage of India. Baba has dealt with dull and difficult topics in a very interesting way illustrating various points with short stories and anecdotes. These books and magazines are a continuous source of inspiration to devotees.

There has been personal interaction too with the devotees. Since his thirtysecond year Baba has visited many towns personally traversing a large area spread over thousands of miles. During such visits to Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, Jaipur, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Jamnagar and many many other towns and villages he has invariably delivered discourses to millions of people reaching out to them with his vibrations of love. Baba's mission has its headquarters in Prasanthi Nilayam. However, centres of Sai activity have sprung up nearly in every town, the larger ones being Dharmakshestra or Satyam in Bombay, Sivam in Hyderabad, Sundaram in Madras and Trayi Vrindavanam in Whitefield near Bangalore.

Sai activity is not confined to India alone. There are Sai Centres in nearly 140 countries spread round the globe. Herein devotees meet regularly to participate in spiritual and service activities. Devotees from abroad have been requesting Baba to visit their respective countries but so far Baba has refrained from going abroad. Only once did he go out and visited Africa and Uganda.

For spiritual regeneration many organizations have been formed under Baba's divine guidance. Most important is the Sathya Sai Seva Organization with its wings of Bal Vikas, Seva Dal and Mahila Vibhag. Under Bal Vikas children between the ages of 5 and fourteen meet once a week and are trained in the moral precepts of Truth, Righteousness, Equanimity, Love and Non-violence. They are also given lessons in the Unity of Faiths and equal respect for all religions. They are taught to be good, to see good and to do good. They are also given an idea of the cultural heritage of India through participation in plays, group songs, story-telling, painting and music-competitions and other activities that inculcate the idea of the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.

Seva Dal takes up service activities such as providing medical facilities in villages, cleaning streets and slums, imparting adult education, doing service in times of flood or drought and offering food to the indigent. In fact all kinds of service activities are taken up by the Seva Dal the motto being that service of mankind is service to God and hence the best form of worship.

Mahila Vibhag coordinates all activities of the women's wing. It holds Bhajans and spiritual talks for women only. It organizes Bal Vikas classes for children. Women cook and collect food for distribution to the poor. They knit sweaters and sew clothes for the

needy. Thus they help in all kinds of spiritual activities for women and children.

The spiritual wing of the organization organizes Bhajans and discourses. It also organizes study circles where devotees meet and discuss spiritual topics and sort out difficulties faced by them in the pursuit of spiritualism. Saadhna camps are also organized wherein practical meditation etc. is undertaken.

Baba says that the aim of education should be moral upliftment. Hence he has founded many educational institutions where the guiding principle is education in human values. The Veda Paathshala for boys was started in 1963 in Prasanthi Nilayam. The following are some of the institutions run by Sathya Sai Trusts :

1. Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Jaipur.
2. Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Bhopal.
3. Sri Sathya Sai School, Ooty.
4. Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth, Sri Sailam, Kerala.
5. Eswaramma High School, Puttaparthi.
6. Sri Sathya Sai Polytechnic, Andheri, Bombay.

Apart from these the Deemed University at Prasanthi Nilayam has the following colleges as its components :

1. Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam.
2. Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce for Men, Whitefield, Bangalore.
3. Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur.

Value based education is imparted at these institutions where teachers also have to be exemplars of values. Besides these institutions devotees run similar schools at many places some of which are Kota, Jaipur, Hyderabad and New Delhi.

What Baba has been propagating is not some new religion. Nor has he established some new sect. In fact he tells us not to relinquish our traditional beliefs nor to forsake our deities. What he preaches is that we must realize the unity of faiths and the fact that basically all religions uphold the values of Truth, Righteousness, Equanimity, Love and Non-Violence. Hence we must have equal regard and respect for all religions. That is why at Sathya Sai Bhajan Centres the emphasis is on singing Sarvadharm Bhajans. To the Hindus Baba tells that they must uphold the ideals and values

enshrined in the Vedas and other scriptures of Sanatana Dharma. He instructs his followers to have firm faith in whatever form they adore and to follow the tenets of the religion that they believe in. That is why among his devotees are not only Hindus but also Christians, Parsis, Sikhs, followers of Buddha and even Muslims. The emblem of Sri Sathya Sai Organization depicts signs of all major religions and the halls at Prasanthi Nilayam prominently display portraits of prophets and saints of all religions. On the occasion of Baba's fiftieth Birthday a 50 foot high pillar was erected extolling all religions.

A token of his love is the mosque that he got constructed at Puttaparthi for the Muslims. Earlier they had to walk 3-4 kilometres daily for worship. Baba himself inaugurated the mosque and materialized lockets for the muslim priests on the occasion. The lockets had 'Allah' embossed on them. Similarly he has materialized pendants with pictures of Christ and chains with icons of the holy crucifix on innumerable occasions for his Christian devotees. Christmas is celebrated with gaiety at Nilayam every year. Baba participates in the celebrations and delivers discourses highlighting the life and teachings of Christ. He has also revealed many little known facts from the life of Christ. These are proofs of his being the omniscient Lord. It has also brought about an end to many controversies surrounding the life of Christ. Baba says that Christ visited India when he was young and remained here for a few days. After his resurrection too he returned to India and relinquished his mortal frame in Srinagar where his Samaadhi is located. He also materialized a life like replica of Christ. The wood of the cross in this replica is taken from the wood of the original, says Baba. A photograph of it can be seen in Samuel Sandweiss' book : 'Baba : The Holy Men and Psychiatrist'. It is also contained in Fani Bunda's book 'Vision of the Divine'. The latter is a Parsi devotee and Baba has frequently enlightened him on the tenets of Zorashtrian religion and has participated in his family functions.

Thus it is evident that Baba does not convert people to Hinduism. Nor has he founded any new religion. If he does preach any religion that is the religion of Love, the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Begin the day with love, fill the day with love, and end the day with love, for that is the way to God—says he. Worship any name and form, he teaches, for all names and forms are one. Man must wake up to his innate divinity that is in danger

of being lost sight of in the rat race for money and the things money can buy. He does not, however, exhort us to renounce our hearth and home. For duty is God and work is worship. The fourfold path of Dharma, Arth, Kaama and Moksha (Risteousness, Money, Desire and Detachment) must be pursued but what he tells us to do is to earn Money through Righteous means and spend it in Righteous work and have the Desire for Detachment. Thus by linking money with righteousness and desire with detachment we can follow the path that leads to God realization—the stage where communion with God is totally established. Then it is that we begin to be good, to see good and to do good. This, in brief, is the mission of Sathya Sai.

Namasmarana is the best Sadhana, it is the most beneficial Sath-Pravarthana. That is the highest Japam, the most profitable Thapas. Kuchela won the Grace of the Lord through the same means. Fill the name with your love, whenever you repeat it, saturate it with devotion that the easiest path for all of you.

BABA : From Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. III

The Organization

‘Man has to develop his latent divinity to illumine the individual and society with Divine Love. As a first step in this direction he must give up violence which emanates because of selfishness and avarice. To enable him to discover the Divinity within he must get rid of evil thoughts, actions and tendencies. The Sathya Sai Seva Organization does not aim at preaching these ideals but at practising them to re-establish the faith of people in these high ideals so that they may advance towards the realization of these ideals’—Baba.

The Sathya Sai Seva Organization was founded as a spiritual organization for the moral and spiritual upliftment of mankind. Some people believe that spiritualism needs no organization. But spiritual needs and practices need to be updated and adjusted according to social circumstances. More over discipline and uniformity are also of prime importance. Modern facilities should also be utilized to full advantage. Adi Sankara had to travel around the country on foot as fast means of travel were not available those days. The media facilities available today also help in speedy and effective dissemination of ideas. To coordinate all these means to advantageous use, an organization is absolutely necessary.

The Sathya Sai movement is unique and the first of its kind in this that it aims at liberation of man from material bondage in this age of materialism and endeavours to awaken man to his innate divinity. It is a global revolution that is taking place through the medium of this organization. In unity lies strength and the goal can be easily achieved if we are strong. Raindrops have no entity but if they come together they form a torrent that rushes onward in the form of a river for communion with its source—the Ocean. The achievements of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization speak for themselves.

The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was first got registered in 1965 as Seva Samithi. Two years later i.e. in 1967 the Seva Dal was formed on an all-India scale. In 1968 the First World Conference of the Organization was organized at Bombay. It was only after this that the devotees scattered over the globe came together under the Organization. Since then every year an all India conference of the Organization began to be organized. Later as the number of devotees increased and as the activities undertaken by the Organization diversified each State began holding annual State Conferences. The Second World Conference was held at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1975 on the occasion of Baba's golden birthday. Since then World Conferences have been held every five years with the 5th held recently in Nov., 90. There is a World Council to oversee the activities undertaken by overseas branches of the Organization. In India there is an all-India President, Presidents in each state, State Coordinators to oversee activities in the districts and at the town and city level. We have Samithis headed by Conveners. Organizational control is absolutely essential to see that the movement does not deviate from the ideals and values propagated by Baba. It is also there to check the entry of unsocial or anti-social elements. This network of the Organization now exists in more than sixty countries reaching out to more than 35 million devotees and catering to their spiritual needs.

The Charter of the Organization states that it is 'a spiritual organization founded for the whole of mankind, not recognizing any distinction or separateness on the basis of religion, caste, colour or creed.' It goes on to proclaim that the organization 'takes within its fold persons belonging to all religions in order to establish unity of all faiths'. The Charter says that 'the most fundamental object of this organization...is to awaken in man the awareness of the Divinity inherent in him by propagating through practice and examples the basic principles of Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Santhi (Peace) and Prema (Love)'. To experience this Divinity mere environment and circumstances outside are not sufficient, but a change in the minds of men is necessary. The activities of the Organization are a means to the spiritual progress in this direction which will enable everyone to enjoy inner peace notwithstanding the stresses and strains, the frustrations and sorrows, the defeats and successes, the ups and downs of life. The emphasis is not on preaching but on precept. In order to remember continuously the high ideals and values set by Baba and to put the same into practice

every member must undergo Sadhana (spiritual discipline) so as to make it a part of his or her daily routine. Through practice of this spiritual discipline the devotees will develop the qualities of selfless love, which will qualify them to transmit to others the Divine message of Baba.

At the town or city level the Samithi is the functional unit. The devotees are the base of the Samithi. The Samithis of 3-4 districts are supervised over by State Coordinators nominated by the State President. Through them the State President ensures implementation of instructions received from the all-India president. The Samithi has a convener selected by the State President with the help of the State Coordinator concerned. The Samithi convener is helped by three coordinators viz. Coordinator—Seva Activities, Coordinator—Educational Activities, and Coordinator—Spiritual Activities. These three Samithi level workers are nominated by the Samithi Convener and constitute the executive of the Samithi. Educational Activities Coordinator must be a lady.

Activities covered are as follows :

Spiritual Activities :

There are regular weekly Bhajans held at Centres approved by the coordinator. Special Bhajans may be organized at homes of devotees.

Sadhana Camps are held usually once a month. Devotees go out to some far removed place of natural beauty and tranquility and undertake Japa, Dhyana (Meditation) etc.

Study Circles are also held at least once a month. Devotees collect at some place and discuss some pre-decided aspect of spiritual practice or some religious or moral topic.

Nagar Sankirtan is performed at dawn on Sundays or other festival days.

All the above activities are coordinated by the Samithi Coordinator for Spiritual Activities.

Seva Activities :

At many places Samithis have adopted villages wherein regular service activity is performed. At some places service activities are taken up regularly in jails, leper-homes, orphanages, slums, Nari Niketans (Women's Protective Homes) etc. Regular medical camps are also organized and medical aid rendered free. In fact any and

every kind of service activity is undertaken by Sathya Sai Seva Dal which is the service unit of the Samithi. Narayana Seva or feeding the poor and needy is also performed frequently. Devotees contribute the provisions, cook the food, and distribute it to the poor and needy. All Seva Activity is coordinated by the Samithi Coordinator for Seva Activities.

Educational Activities :

Educational activities are coordinated by a lady coordinator. Most important among these is the Bal Vikas movement. Under this, weekly classes – usually on Sundays—are held for children between the ages five to fourteen. There are three groups each having separate classes. Children between the ages five to eight are in Group I, eight to eleven in Group II, and 12 to 14 in Group III which is also known as Pre-Seva Dal. Classes are conducted as per syllabi laid down and examinations are also held. The syllabus contains Slokas, Stotras and Bhajans apart from lives of saints of all religions, prayers of all religions lessons on the unity of faiths and parables from various religions. The aim is to inculcate good habits among children and train young minds on the spiritual path and to have equal respect for all religions.

The devotees in general and the Samithi members help in all activities undertaken by a Samithi. Although anyone and everyone is welcome to attend the various activities, membership is granted to those only who have moral integrity, spiritual inclination and have no such vices as alcoholism etc. Members are required to follow a nine-fold code of conduct given below :

1. Meditation and Japa every day.
2. Bhajan with all members of the family once a week.
3. Participation in Bal Vikas programme by children of the family.
4. Participation in community work and other programmes of the orgn.
5. Attendance at least once a month at Bhajan or Nagar Sankirtan organized by the organization.
6. Regular study of Sai Literature.
7. To speak softly with everyone.
8. Not to indulge in talking ill of others especially in their absence.
9. Narayana Seva-some cereals to be kept aside every day to feed the needy and to inculcate the habit of not wasting food.

Although this code of conduct is meant for the Samithi members, all devotees strive to adhere to it.

Whereas the branches of the Organization in India are known as Samithis they are designated as Sathya Sai Centres in other countries. Their activities are coordinated by the World Council which has its central office in Prasanthi Nilayam. Although the whole Organization is run by devotees for devotees the office bearers seek the guidance of Baba from time to time by organizing All India Conferences and World Conferences which are invariably held in Prasanthi Nilayam. At such times Baba delivers discourses which form guidelines.

Namasmarana is the main activity conducted at Bhajan centres. The quality of and discipline at Bhajan sessions is such that it has become the tour-de-force of the organization. Baba says that Namasmarana not only purifies the mind, heart and feelings but is also an effective check on one's ego. At a Bhajan centre the frequency of holding Bhajans is normally weekly. In the beginning Bhajans were organized only on Thursdays, but as the number of devotees grew and looking to the vast distances in large cities Baba clarified that Bhajans may be held on any day of the week keeping in view the fact that devotees be not required to traverse long distances to attend Bhajans. Under Baba's guidance certain guidelines have been evolved which are followed throughout the world.

Normally a Bhajan session is not to exceed an hour. On festivals it may go up to ninety minutes. Absolute punctuality is observed irrespective of the worldly rank and status of the devotees joining in or holding the Bhajan. One Bhajan does not exceed three minutes. Bhajans are sung alternately by men and women singers. Absolute discipline and silence is maintained, for it is only in silence that the steps of God can be heard. No offerings in cash or kind are allowed at the Arathi after the Bhajan. No Prasad except Vibhuti should be distributed. After the Bhajan devotees should leave the place quietly without talking to each other. Thus they can carry home the tranquility experienced for one hour. Bhajans invoking all deities such as Ganesh, Guru, Ma. Shiva, Rama, Krishna and Narayana are sung at the session. There is more emphasis on Sarvadharm Bhajans (Bhajans regarding all religions). Attending a Sai Bhajan is an uplifting and electrifying experience most helpful in realization of the Divinity within.

Baba lays great stress on Dhyana or meditation. His book Dhyana Vahini deals in detail with the ways of achieving effective meditation. After Bhajans and before Aarathi meditation is done for about two minutes. From time to time Samithis organize Sadhna Camps wherein collective meditation is undertaken. Omkar is chanted twentyone times. Gayathri Mantra is also chanted in some Samitis, Dhyana is done for an hour or so. Baba says that Jyothi or the flame is the best object to concentrate upon during Dhyana. This illumines the mind and super-consciousness in man. Almost all devotees practice meditation in their daily worship routine too.

Study circles are also arranged by the Organization. Usually every Samithi has a library containing books on spiritual topics. Baba has himself authored many such books. Discussion among devotees is held in study circles with a view to removing doubts. Often talks on spiritual subjects are also arranged wherein some learned or self-realized person delivers a discourse followed by question-answers.

Although the nine fold code of conduct lays stress on the reading of Sai Literature daily Baba lays emphasis on practice and precept rather than fruitless reading. He says that too much study without discrimination often leads to confusion or results in an inflated ego. This is the greatest hindrance in the spiritual path. Books provide only guidance that must be tested on the anvil of experience. Baba does not advocate too much study as it results in many kinds of malaise of the mind.

Baba repeatedly points out that the Organization is based on Love and Service. These two have to be put into practice. Membership cannot be gained through donations. The Organization is not for self-aggrandisement. Office bearers must set examples of Sadhna and good conduct for others to follow. An office bearer—nay every devotee—must have an image in society so that he is a source of inspiration to others. For he is the servant of God—the Chosen one—the torch bearer. He must never indulge in or encourage divisive forces. Equanimity must be his forte he must exercise control over his desires and Indriyas. Then only can he hope to draw upon him the Grace of the Lord, His Love and Compassion.

Baba has prohibited membership fee or collection of funds. He says that when good work is undertaken with pious intention there

is no dearth of money. When some project is undertaken those who have the means should come forward to contribute. These contributions should be kept secret and never publicized. No preference should be given nor no place of honour be bestowed for monetary considerations. Devotees in general should not be told who has contributed how much and who has not contributed at all. For money most often becomes a hinderance in spiritual progress. Austerity instead of ostentation, is the hall-mark of programmes undertaken by Samithis. Baba says that you need not buy even flowers for Bhajan sessions. If you have come in your own garden, it is well and good. Do not waste money on decoration. Instead, feed the needy with it. Money leads to quarrels, distrust and differences. So, avoid collecting money. Love, humility, detachment and service constitute real wealth. Only they can lead you to God. For, says Baba, money comes and goes but morality comes and grows.

Women too have a very important role to play in the organization. Mahila Vibhag or the women's wing organizes exclusively women's Bhajans. Baba is against mixing of sexes in spiritual activities as it is an impediment to spiritual progress. That is why in common Bhajans too ladies sit together separate from the gents. In the performance of Narayana Seva ladies cook the food while men distribute it. During functions, celebrations etc. the women's wing of Seva Dal maintains discipline among women. Bal Vikas is also looked after by the Mahila Vibhag.

Baba repeatedly points out that service to man is service to God. That is why service activities have prime importance in the organization. Seva Dal looks after the service aspect. Baba says that seva brings out the good and noble qualities in man. Usually man is dominated by his gross body and the desires that emanate from it. This leads to overpowering passions such as avarice, greed and vanity. The result is selfishness. The selfish person, says Baba, gets and forgets whileas the selfless one gives and forgives. Selflessness can be developed only through service to others. Service rendered with love awakens the latent divinity in man. Service is different from charity in this that charity results from ego and it is not based on compassion and love.

Divinity is inherent in all. Thus all are brothers with God as father. The realization of this unity leads to tolerance and patience. Service should be rendered with humility with the reali-

zation that the one who is serving and the one who is served are the same. There is no low or high service. Sweeping is as noble as serving food. Once the nobility of service is realized it is the highest stage of Sadhana. The serving hand is nobler than the worshiping hand. The fruit of Seva is bliss and it is the means through which the Grace of the Lord can be earned.

With a view to service the Sathya Sai Seva Dal have adopted villages in the whole of India. Medical camps and adult literacy classes are conducted there. Village-schools are provided with facilities. Village wells are cleaned and disinfected and veterinary camps are organized for the cattle. Agricultural guidance is also provided. At some places guidance in the running of cottage industries is also provided.

Actually the duties and scope of Seva Dal have no limitations. Local needs are the guiding factor. Programmes are drawn in view of practical requirements and problems. Publicity and propaganda are abjured. Among the various activities are visits to hospitals, orphanages, jails, women's homes, and institutions for the blind and infirm. Drug abuse is also being tackled. Slums are cleaned and clothes and utensils are distributed. Many people are unaware of this silent revolution as Sai devotees do not like publicity or propaganda. Their aim is to serve not to seek name or fame.

Children are our future and if we want our future to be good we must catch them young. The Bal Vikas movement is thus a nation-building effort of the organization. Its aim is the cultural, moral and spiritual upliftment of children. It endeavours to provide an environment in which children inculcate good habits. The divinity within begins to glow in its divine light as a result. That will make them good leaders and citizens of society when they grow up.

Under Bal Vikas, children between the ages of six and fifteen meet once a week and are imparted lessons in the moral precepts of Truth, Righteousness, Equanimity, Love and Non-Violence. They are also acquainted with the Unity of Faiths and taught to have equal respect for all religions and to be good, to see good and to do good. They come to know of the cultural heritage of India through participation in plays, group-songs, story telling, painting and music competitions. Other activities are also undertaken that impress upon the young minds the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.

Bal Vikas classes are divided into three groups. Group I consists of children between the ages six to nine; Group II between nine to eleven; and Group III between twelve to fifteen. Each group has a separate teacher—preferably a lady—known as Bal Vikas Guru. The programme does not dwell on bookish knowledge only but has a human and humane approach aimed at character-building and personality development. The syllabus is so designed that each item can be logically explained and justified.

Baba has also provided guidance from time to time through his discourses. He has pointed out that the Bal Vikas programme cannot succeed through strictness or punishment meted out to children. The Gurus must win the hearts of the children through love and compassion. Environment in the homes is an important factor in moulding a child's personality. So Gurus should visit the homes of B. V. children and talk to their parents. As far as possible children of all faiths should form a class so that they develop love and tolerance for all religions. The children should also be initiated into Sadhana which is essential to control the monkey mind. Gurus should set an example for the children to follow. Then only good citizens of the future will be evolved.

Under the Bal Vikas programme thousands of classes are being conducted around the world towards evolving a new and better world order.

Finally, it must be made clear that the Sathya Sai Seva Organization is an organization formed and run by devotees only for their own betterment. Baba has not ordained it as his propaganda machinery. However, he does provide guidance but only when the office bearers seek guidance. Through the various wings the Organization is striving for the moral and spiritual upliftment of man rid of his baser instincts and vices. A well-coordinated effort is on to involve all the aspects of society to redeem man from his precipitous fall into materialism and to awaken him to his latent divinity. The Organization is acting as a catalytic agent towards the realization of that goal.

Shirdi Sai Reborn

Shirdi Sai took Mahasamadhi (discarded the human form) on Vijaya Dashmi day in 1918. But before that he had told Abdul, his devotee, that he would reincarnate eight years later. Baba told him : "I shall appear again and give you Darshan." "When will that be ?" asked Abdul. Baba told him : "It will be after eight years." When he was asked in what form the next advent would take place, Shirdi Baba told Abdul alone : "I will give Darshan in the name of Sathya for upholding Truth." He had further added, "The first advent was in Maharashtra. The second advent will be in Madras." When Sathya Sai made his advent Andhra Pradesh was part of Madras Presidency. (Discourse of Sathya Sai Baba — 28-9-90) Accordingly, Sathya Sai was born in 1926. Glimpses of his being the same Sai reborn were visible right from Sathya Sai's early boyhood days. However, no one was able to comprehend these strange events till he explicitly declared that he was Sai Baba of Shirdi reborn. This happened on the 23rd of May, 1940 when Baba was reprimanded by his father and told to reveal his real identity. No one had even heard of Shirdi Sai at the time in that remote hamlet of Puttaparthi.

Sai Baba had suddenly appeared at Shirdi as a young man and settled down there. During his lifetime he never told anyone about his early years upto the age of sixteen. It was Sathya Sai who told one of his teachers at Bukkapattnam the details about those early sixteen years of Shirdi Sai's life. He again revealed the details of Shirdi Sai's birth and early life in a discourse on 28-9-90. The most authentic biography of Sai Baba—sans the first sixteen years—was written by Govind Rao Dabolkar also known as Hemadpant in Marathi. This had the blessings of Shirdi Sai himself and was later translated into English, Hindi, etc.

As told by Sathya Sai Baba, Shirdi Sai was born in the village of Pathri in a Brahmin family on the 28th of September in 1835. His

parents Ganga Bhavdiya and Dev Giri Amma were devout devotees of Siva and Paravathi who blessed them with this son. "As Ganga-bhavadya had developed a feeling of total detachment and renunciation, he decided to repair to a forest regardless of the child. Deva-giriamma, decided to follow the husband, leaving the child.

"There was in the same village a Sufi fakir. As he was also childless, he took charge of this child and brought him up in his home. The boy stayed in the Fakir's home for four years (1835 to 1839). The Fakir passed away in the tide of time. The Fakir's wife, who had lavished great affection on the child, was grief-stricken. To add to her worries, the boy was behaving in a troublesome manner. What the boy used to do was to visit a Hindu temple and sing songs in praise of Allah. The Hindus used to chastise the boy in various ways for his misbehaviour. Nor was that all. He would enter a mosque and declare: "Rama is God", "Siva is Allah". Members belonging to both the communities went to the Fakir's wife and complained about the boy's behaviour. Unable to deal with this situation the Fakir's wife handed over the boy to high-souled, pious scholar named Venkusa, who was living near her house. The boy stayed in Venkusa's ashram for 12 years from 1839 to 1851. Venkusa was extremely fond of the boy. Seeing this, in course of time, members of the ashram developed envy towards the boy.

"One night in 1851, the boy left the ashram. He reached Shirdi, a very small village at the time. He stayed there for barely two months and then went about wandering from place to place. After strolling for many years, he reached a place called Dhoop-kheda. When he was residing there, the marriage of Chandu Patel's brother's son was celebrated there. Baba joined the marriage party and reached Shirdi again. That was in the year 1858. From that day till 1918, he did not move out of Shirdi. He remained there for 60 years." (Baba's discourse-28.9.90) He started living in a dilapidated mosque. With the passage of time a large following grew around him and his followers started calling him Sai. Ultimately he came to be known as Sai Baba.

In Shirdi, Sai Baba used to hold regular congregations. Often he was visited by itinerant saints and Fakirs. Both Hindus and Muslims visited him. He was a frequent visitor to the local Hanuman temple. He gave shelter to a Muslim named Johar Ali who was in distress. Baba always evaded an answer whenever he was

asked whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim. He came to be known for his miraculous powers and his fame spread far and wide, and brought in people of all religions at his lotus feet.

An event that convinced people of Shirdi Sai's divinity has been recorded by Hemadpant. Baba used to ask for alms in the beginning. He used to get oil from the shopkeepers who once decided that no one would give him oil. So he had no oil to light lamps. As evening turned into night he filled the lamps with water and then lighted them. They continued to burn long into the night. The people of Shirdi were awe-struck and decided not to play more pranks on him.

Shirdi Sai taught his followers to have equal respect for all religions as basically Rama and Rahim were the same. Live in love, he told them. As a result he had both Hindu and Muslim devotees. He participated actively in Rama Navmi, Vijaya Dashmi, Gokul Ashtmi celebrations as also in Id and other Muslim festivals. The arrangements were made by devotees belonging to both faiths. He got the mosque repaired by the Muslims and undertook repairs of the local temples with the help of Hindus. Geeta and Quran were recited in his presence while as Bhajans, Natyas and Quawalis were sung in honour of God.

Baba loved his devotees like his own children and hence took pains to rid them of ego-born vanity. There was one Kalke who was very proud of having performed Haj pilgrimages many times. He went to meet Baba many times who refused to entertain him. When Baba's favourite devotee Shama put in a word for him Baba told him that Kalke was puffed up with vanity and considered himself holier than others. This was against the basic tenets of the Holy Quran he said. Similarly he chided a devout Brahmin who considered Baba to be a lowly Muslim. As this man, named Megha, approached him, Baba said : 'You are very proud of being a Brahmin. I am but a lowly Muslim. Why desecrate yourself in my precincts ?' and he asked his followers to turn him out. Later, this very man became a well-known devotee of Baba but only after shedding his vanity and his dislike for other religions. Baba very often chided and reprimanded his devotees for worshiping him instead of practicing the values taught by him.

Various incidents are recounted of Shirdi Sai having taken upon himself the illnesses or distresses of his devotees out of sheer compassion. On one occasion Baba was sitting by the fire that was

constantly lit in his Aashram and talking to his devotees. Suddenly he thrust his hand in the flames. He told his dismayed audience that he had done so to save the child of a poor ironsmith who had fallen into a fire some distance away. The boy was saved though Baba's arm got badly burned. Similarly he saved the son of Mrs Khaparde from plague. She had come to Shirdi for Baba's Darshan but her son caught plague. She rushed to Baba who said : 'The sky is overcast. But soon the clouds will disappear.' He raised his Kafni (Headgear) to reveal how he had developed glandular inflammation caused by plague. The boy however recovered. Baba used to say that the alleviation of the sufferings of his devotees was his Dharma. He must help them in their hours of need.

Many incidents prove the omnipresence and omnipotence of Shirdi Sai. He often confronted his devotees with statements they had made while far away from Shirdi ; or actions they had indulged in when they believed no one was watching. He saved the village of Shirdi from the onslaught of epidemic by simply going round drawing a line around the village. He cured Shama bitten by a venomous snake by simply saying : 'Go away, Go away.' He cured Bhimaji Patil of tuberculosis by simply appearing in his dream twice. Dattopant was rid of his cholera by simply eating a pinch of Udhi (holy ash) given by him. All these incidents are proofs of his omnipotence. His knowledge of people was beyond the limitations of time. Commenting upon two goats he said they were real brothers in their earlier lives and had then killed each other in a dispute over property. Similarly pointing to a frog being chased by a serpent he said that both were human beings in earlier life who clashed often in their avarice. In this life too their enmity persisted.

Shirdi Sai was compassionate towards animals too. A woman invited him to a feast. However, a dog entered the house and ate of the food. The dog was beaten and chased away. Baba did not attend the feast. When the woman complained Baba replied that he had visited her house but had been beaten by sticks and chased away. Similarly he was kind to a tiger that was brought to him in chains. The tiger laid his head at Baba's feet and passed away. He always said : 'God resides in all creation !'

Baba dropped off his mortal coil on the fifteenth of October, 1918. Vijaya Dashmi was being celebrated in Shirdi on the day when he gave indication that his soul was eager to merge in the

Oversoul. He passed away quietly. After his death the last rites could not be performed on the body due to a dispute among his Hindu and Muslim followers. The Hindus wished to cremate him while the Muslims insisted on burial. It is said that when the shroud was removed the body had changed into flowers that were interred at the place where his Samadhi now stands. The temple had been constructed to install the idol of Krishna but instead got Shirdi Sai through a unanimous decision of the villagers and devotees.

There are numerous similarities in the mission and messages of both Sais. The task of religious regeneration left unfinished by Shirdi Sai has been resumed in the Sathya Sai form and goes on un-faillingly. Both forms share the same way of thinking, the same compassionate nature, and the same way of promoting their actions. Explaining their mission Baba declared on 28.9.90, 'The two bodies are different, but the Divinity is one. The first advent was for revealing Divinity. The second advent is to awaken the Divinity (in human beings). The next advent (Prema Sai) is for propagating Divinity. The three Sais are : Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Prema Sai.' Holy ash has been the hall mark of both—holy ash with its properties of curing ills of the body as well as the mind. Both are marked by their upholding the philosophy of Unity of Faiths and equal regard for all religions. Consequently people of all faiths and religions worship them.

Sathya Sai Baba carries on the mission taking up from where Shirdi Sai left. He is the compassionate one and in numerous cases has taken upon himself—thus curing—the numerous illnesses and distresses under which some of his devotees might have succumbed. The translator of this book has himself been recipient of such grace in his own case as well as that of his wife. Details can be found in his book : Sathya Sai Avatar : Glimpses of Divinity.

Sathya Sai too uses Vibhuti (holy ash) for curative purposes. He appears in dreams to guide and protect devotees and says that they are not dream-appearances but real communications. He recounts incidents from the past—even from previous births—in order to impress certain lessons upon devotees. His campaign of social reform and upliftment of mankind is gaining momentum each day.

There are devotees lucky enough to have seen and adored both forms. One such case is of Sharda Devi. Born in 1888 she was a devout devotee of Shirdi Sai. Before his passing away Baba had told

her to come to live in his ashram later when he would reincarnate in Andhra. When she heard of Sathya Sai in 1940 she came for Darshan. At once Sathya Sai recognized her and addressed her as 'Gauri' a name by which Shirdi Sai called her endearingly. She was overwhelmed by this 'miracle' of Bal Sai. She owed Shirdi Sai sixteen Rupees which Sathya Sai demanded from her as proof of his being the same Sai. Later on, she left home and took up abode in Prasanthi Nilayam.

The Raja of Chincholi was another devotee of the Shirdi Sai. Later, when the Rani went to Sathya Sai he enquired from her about the Hanuman idols that he—in his Shirdi form—had given her husband. Kakaji Dixit was another devotee of Shirdi days. When his nephew visited Prashanthi Nilayam Sathya Sai materialized a photograph of Kaka Dixit for him and referred to many incidents of the latter's life that related to the Shirdi period.

These and many other incidents convinced devotees that Sathya Sai is none other than Shirdi Sai come again. But, the world has always been beset with duality and shall continue to be thus plagued. Proof of duality emanates from the fact that though all devotees of Sathya Sai have pictures of Shirdi Sai in their shrines and worship both forms as being two aspects of the same reality it is not so vice versa. There are thousands of devotees of Shirdi Sai who do not believe in—rather decry—Sathya Sai. Without even trying to delve deep and find out the truth they revel in duality and close their ears and minds to all else. This world is Maya, and duality is another name for Maya. So, why try to convince anyone about Sathya Sai? Baba is Truth and each one of us must experience truth for himself, for, hearsay is no evidence. Go ye, then, to Prasanthi Nilayam! Seek and be rewarded! For Sai has incarnated to redeem the likes of you and me!



My name is Baba, B. A., B. A. I am a double graduate,what do these letters means? B means Being, Sath; A means Awareness, Chith. The second B means Bliss, Anand, and the second A means Atman. The entire word means I am Sathchidanand Atman.

*—From the Discourse of Shri Sathya Sai Baba on
21-2-71 in Prasanthi Nilayam.*

From Age to Age I Incarnate

*Like a feast to a starving man,
Like rain for the parched earth,
Like a child to one yearning for a son,
The Lord comes to protect Dharma
And save the virtuous and the good.*

—Baba

Thus spoke Krishna too on the fields of Kurukshetra. He announced to Arjun that whenever Dharma declines and evil tendencies become preponderant, then, for the resurrection of righteousness, to protect the good and the righteous, to destroy evil, God incarnates from age to age. This promise of the Lord is contained in the Gita. Other religions too proclaim that from time to time God or his messenger—a prophet, a son of God, Avatar—does incarnate to redeem mankind. Lord Gautam the Buddha—who is said to have been an agnostic declared to one of his disciples: “It must be acknowledged that from time to time Tathagata is born in this world. Such a one is the embodiment of knowledge and goodness; he radiates light, love and bliss and is respected and worshiped by the masses. He is an unequalled torch bearer and guide for the fallen; he is the preceptor not only of men but of gods too and his form is Bliss. He not only upholds Truth but is an exemplar of Truth as a way of life, a life of piety and fulness.”

Indian religious texts—The Mahabharata, Vishnu Purana, Agni Purana—describe in detail the attributes of an Avatar and also contain prophesies about a Kalki Avatar to be born in South India. The New Testament of the Bible also contains a description of an Avatar. Prophet Mohammed had also talked of a later prophet even greater than himself. Apart from these, many great seers and saints like Aurobindo also talked of an incarnation who would redeem mankind. The twentieth century with its materialism

and stockpiling of suicidal weapons seems to be the right time for such an incarnation. Let us examine the attributes of Sathya Sai Baba to discover whether he is The Avatar.

Christians have always held the belief that God shall incarnate. This belief is based on what Christ had said. 'He who has sent me shall come again', promised Christ. Basing his studies upon the Bible, Ron Laing compared Baba with Christ. Later he asked Baba himself whether he was the one who had sent Christ. Baba's answer and lucid analysis convinced him and his wife that he is none but an incarnation of the Almighty.

Reubens Lowenberg claims to have uncovered those verses in The New Testament which, according to him, clearly point to the coming of Sai. The relevant text is contained in verses 11 to 15 of Chapter 19. In the said chapter the description is thus given :

Verse 11—"And I saw heaven opened, (says St. John) and beheld a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True and in righteousness he doth judge and make war".

Verse 12—"His eyes were as a flame of fire and on his head had a name written, that no man knew but he himself".

Verse 13—"And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the word of God."

Verse 14—"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

Verse 15—"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the winepress and wrath of Almighty God."

The similarities with Sathya Sai are traced as hereunder : Baba's devotees consider him to be the Kalki Avatar. The White horse of Baba is the white car he generally travels in. Baba is called Truth (Sathya). The vesture dipped in blood is the red robe of Baba. The crown upon his head is the curly hair of Baba. Baba's army of Seva Dal wears white clothes only and follows him wherever he goes. The sword that emanates from his mouth is the voice of Truth that dispels darkness through his discourses which conquer the hearts of all men in all nations. Thus, both Lowenberg and Ron Laing are convinced that Baba is the Avatar promised in the Bible.

In Chapters 190 and 191 of the Aranyaka Parva of The Mahabharata the saint Markandeya has described what would happen in Kali Age when Dharma declines and evil propensities gain ascendance. Says Markandeya to Yudhishtira : 'In the Kali age the four Varnas of mankind will indulge in evil practices and unrighteous ways. Dharma shall suffer due to the inflated ego of Brahmins. Desires, avarice, anger and loss of faith shall lead to strife in society. Violence shall become the order of the day and people will take to stealing and corrupt practices. They will deny and negate the very existence of God'. The seer then goes on to describe the redeemer saying that he would be born in Sambalpur village in a Brahmin household. His name would be Vishnuyasha and he would be very wise and wonderful. With the force of his will power he shall command all prosperity, transport and arsenal. He would bring peace and bliss to the world.'

If we match this description with Baba we find material difference of facts. Though Baba is engaged in establishment of Dharma and commands respect of the whole he was not born of Brahmin parents. Though it may be said that Vishnuyasha and Satyanarayana—the names—are the same, Baba was born in Puttaparthi and not in Sambalpur.

A point to ponder is that Sathya Sai is the middle or central element of a trinity of Sai Avatars—Shirdi Sai being the previous one and Prema Sai yet to come. Thus the Avatar is unfolding over a vast span of time. May be the description of the Kalki Avatar contained in the Mahabharata and the Puranas is sumum bonum of the trinity of Sai. Baba, on occasions, has shown visions of the ten Avatars to some of his devotees wherein they vouch—Hilda Charlton for one—that the tenth Avatar as seen by them was Baba himself astride a white steed. On innumerable occasions he has manifested his inherent attributes of Avatarhood. That is why his devotees equate him with Rama and Krishna calling him Sai Rama or Sai Krishna.

All this discussion brings us to prophet Mohammed's prophesy. Many prophesies of the prophet Mohammed are contained in the Arabic book 'The Ocean of Light'. The thirteenth volume of this book titled Mehedi Moud meaning 'the promised guide' contains a detailed description of the future prophet. On being asked by his followers whether he himself was the master of the universe, Hazrat Mohammed replied in the negative—says the book—

and went on to describe the future prophet : 'When he comes he shall be omnipotent ; no one will be able to vanquish him. He shall be beyond time. He will be an incarnation of God to converse with the humans in human form. His hair will be profuse ; his forehead will be large and concave ; the nose will be small ; he will be clean-shaven. He will have a mole on the cheek ; his clothing will be of the colour of flame. His body will be small in size. In all the above attributes Sathya Sai Baba matches the description.

Hazrat Mohammad later on enumerates other characteristics by saying that all the teachings of religions of the world will be in his heart from the birth. All things which you will ask from God, he will give you, all the treasures of the world are his at his mere bidding. He will give gifts that are light in weight. He will live 95 or 96 years (Baba has declared tht sama about himself). All the above characteristics indisputably point to Baba.

Hazrat Mohammad has also mentioned that he will live on a hill (Prasanthi Nilayam, of course) and that this Master of the world will bring things out of his body and through his mouth.' Baba brought out Lingams through his mouth till 1976 and creates and materializes various object for his devotees. Mohammed also visualized that this Avatar's devotees 'will assemble under a huge tree'. (Note the Banyan tree at Trayee Vrindavan, Whitefield) He foretold that his devotees will have dots on their forehead (Surely Vibhuti worn by devotees). Mohammed regrets that Muslims will be unable to see the divinity of this incarnation who shall become Lord of the Universe in the last twenty years of his life. To the Muslims, he says, his Godhood shall be revealed only in the last nine years of his sojourn on this earth.

These attributes totally match Baba. The prophecy not only totally applies to Baba but is also a conclusive proof that Mohammed was a true seer.

Aurobindo the saint learnt of the advent of Sai Avatar the very next day after his birth. He has vouchsafed as much on page 208 of his book 'Aurobindo on Himself and The Mother'. On 24th of Nov., 1926 Aurobindo was in meditation for 45 minutes along with his disciples. On conclusion of the meditation session he declared 'Krishna has incarnated in human form. Incarnation of Krishna means the incarnation of Godhead or incarnation of the Oversoul or Bliss. Krishna is Ananda and he shall lead mankind onward on the spiritual path to self-realization'. Aurobindo further

elucidated his point in a written statement in Oct., 1935. 'Krishna incarnated in human form in this material world on 24th of Nov., 1926.' (Uttaryogi : Sri Aurbindo pp 263-4) Aurobindo being a self-realized soul could no doubt know of the advent of Baba. But the 'message' registered with him only on the 24th—a day after the birth of Sathya Sai. The divine—conscious Aurbindo came to know of the Avatar but perhaps did not know of the place or the human form chosen by the Avatar.

Having realized that the Avatar had arrived for the upliftment of man, Aurobindo went into isolation breaking his meditation only on four days in a year. One of these days—when he made public appearances after 1926—used to be the 24th of Nov. Aurobindo knew full well that the task of resurrecting mankind from the morass of materialism was now the mission of no less than the Avatar. Hence the state of his Samadhi ! Although the disciples of Aurobindo regarded him as an Avatar, Aurobindo refuted it time and again.

An astrologer of Bangalore named Gunjar Narayan Shastri stumbled upon an ancient book written on palm leaves. The book 'Sukanadi Granth' is authored by the ancient sage and seer Suka-deva. It contains a portion titled 'Sai Charitamrit Grantham' running into about one hundred pages. It contains a detailed description of the Sai Avatar. Inter-spersed with the various events of the life of Sai are prophecies of his power and ability to materialize almost any object as well as details of his mission and message. Mrs. S. Balu has examined its various aspects in her book 'Living Divinity'.

Baba has stated : "Your worldly intelligence cannot fathom the ways of God. You may benefit from God, but you cannot explain him. In truth, you cannot understand the nature of my reality either today, or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent enquiry, even if all mankind joins in the effort. But in a short time you will become cognizant of the Bliss showered by the Divine Principle which has taken upon itself this sacred body and this sacred name." Hence it has been possible to know whatever little we know of the Sai Avatar only through whatever glimpses he has chosen to give us to reveal his cosmic form from time to time.

Baba in his Shirdi Sai form once said to his devotees : 'Wherever you may be, whatever you may do, you must remember, is known to me. I dwell in all beings and the whole animate and

inanimate world is within me. The whole universe is subject to my command. I am the creator, preserver and destroyer. No one can harm my devotees. Those who ignore me get entangled in the cobweb of Maya (illusion). All names and forms of the universe—the static as well as the changing—are mine.’

When Arjuna was beset with doubts resulting in inactivity Krishna inspired him by revealing to him his cosmic form. Similarly our dear Sathya Sai Baba inspires us from time to time by revealing some aspect of his reality. Thus spake Sai Krishna on Gokul Ashtami day the 14th of August, 1990 : “In the Treta Yuga Rama came as the very embodiment of Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness). In the Dwapara Yuga, the Lord incarnated as Krishna, the embodiment of Santhi and Prema (Equanimity and Love). Today the Avatar has come as the embodiment of all the four—Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema.”

On Vaikunth Ekadasi day in 1945 Baba recited a self-composed lyric in Telgu which runs somewhat like this :

*Brothers and sisters
Let us go to Puttaparthi
Where God has incarnated
He is Shiva and Rama
Krishna, Hanumana
All forms are his.*

The historic letter written by Baba to his brother (quoted earlier in this book) is the Document of Divinity which has proved true word for word over the years since 1947 when it was written. ‘Avatars make their advent only to confer Divine bliss on mankind’, says Baba, and goes on to elucidate that ‘confidence in one’s self is the pre-requisite for cognizing Divinity.’

Explaining why he chose the human form Baba says : ‘The Lord has to come in human form and move about among men so that he can be listened to, contacted, loved, revered and obeyed. He has to speak the language of men and behave like human beings, as a member of the species. Otherwise, he will be either negated and neglected or feared and avoided.’ And goes on to add : ‘If I had come amongst you as Narayana with four arms, holding the cunch, the disc, the mace and the lotus, you would have kept me in a museum and charged a fee from those who seek Darshan; if I had come as a mere man, you would not have respected my teaching and followed it for your own good. So I have to be in this human form, with superhuman wisdom and powers’.

Often it happens that those very people for whose welfare and upliftment God binds himself in human form are unable to cognize him. 'It is a great misfortune', says Baba, 'that you seek the blessings of God the formless but when God in human form is present before you, doubts and uncertainties confuse you so as to negate his very existence. If you seek pearls you have to delve deep into the ocean; you can gain nothing by sitting on the shore and counting the waves. Have firm faith; if you wish to have the grace of God. A half-hearted effort, when you are afflicted with doubts, hesitation and confusion, will lead you nowhere'. Baba was once asked why some of his devotees are drenched in the showers of grace while others languish for even an iota. And he replied that three things are pre-requisites for his grace. They are : firm faith, total surrender and constant prayer.

On Gokul Ashtmi day in 1967 Baba proclaimed that the Lord incarnates from age to age for the sake of regeneration reformation and resurrection of mankind. 'Today', he said, 'Mahasakthi, Maya Sakthi and Yoga Sakthi have incarnated in one form. Seek and be blessed !' In the first World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations Baba declared that it was the good fortune of all those present there that for the first time a conference was being blessed by a living Avatar. The delegates were luckier than eminent saints and seers in this that the Living God was moving amongst them to bless and uplift them. In fact man cannot fathom the depths of divinity with the help of his puny intelligence. But even a glimpse of The Eternal is enough to fill man with real and lasting bliss.

Highlighting the reasons that compel God to incarnate Baba has said that when the world suffers chaos, resulting in loss of peace, the Lord has to don the human form to reestablish righteousness and peace. Today, because of predominance of hatred and jealousy peace and unity are nowhere to be found in the family, the school, the society, the village and cities. "I have come in fulfilment of the prayers of saints and seers. My task is to foster the Vedas and to protect my devotees."

Elucidating upon the Avatar's task of destruction of evil Baba has said that during the times of Rama and Krishna there were only a few perpetrators of evil deeds. Hence they were destroyed. Today, nearly everyone has some vices or has committed some sin. So, in the present circumstances it is not possible to eliminate evil by eliminating the evil-doer. For, if this is done, perhaps all mankind

will be destroyed. The Avatar has therefore undertaken to reform people through personal precept, contact and discourses. He has chosen the weapon of Divine Love to educate and inspire people towards a better and more meaningful way of life. It is, therefore, evident that the present Avatar aims at transformation of thought and through it transformation of deeds. The process is, therefore, psychological rather than physical. Man, today, is so engrossed in materialism that he needs the help of the Divine Principle in human form to awaken him to a consciousness of the divinity within him.

Under the influence of western pursuit of materialism man today gives more importance to the physical over the spiritual, to the temporal over the eternal, and to the gross over the ethereal. Attachment to the world has resulted in loss of detachment. Man prefers Kamā and Arth (Desires and Money) to Dharma and Moksha (Righteousness and Detachment). He has lost faith in true and universal values, moral and religious codes, and traditional purity of heart. He can be resurrected only when his latent Divinity is rekindled.

Man, today, has limited himself in the narrow and harmful barriers of caste, creed, religions, notions and nations resulting in conflicts at every level. Sai has come to establish the Unity of Faiths by making us realize the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Only when we realize these deeper values and universal truths can we hope to be liberated from our animal instincts. Man today, is sitting over a highly explosive arsenal capable of wiping out his very existence. This has resulted from an over-emphasis on and a misuse of science. Only God can save him from his efforts at self-destruction. Hence the Avatar. Many people are beset with doubts whether circumstances will change for the better, says Baba. 'I assure you', he continues, 'that mankind will be saved from doom, the lives of people will be full of happiness and bliss and the Golden Age shall be established !' The Avatar shall surely succeed in his mission !

According to the Hindu scriptures all Avatars are partial or full manifestations of Lord Vishnu. Hence, all of them are embodiments of the same Divine Principle. Baba has often proclaimed that the Sai Avatars are a continuum of the same chain. He has a disinclination for milk and milk-products which he explains by saying that he had a surfeit of butter and curds in his Krishnavtar days.

On the Gokul Ashtmi day in 1977 he paused in the middle of his discourse to the inmates of the hostel of Sathya Sai College at Whitefield. Congratulating the students on their good fortune of having the same Krishna as an embodiment of Love amongst them he said : 'Now I will show you the Kaustubha Mani (Precious jewel) that I wore as Krishna'. So saying he waved his hand and produced a brilliantly radiant precious jewel which he passed around for everyone to see. He then tied a towel round his head to show how he wore his head-dress with peacock feathers in it when he was Krishna. Baba once appeared as Krishna to John Hislop also. Hence his devotees adore him as Sai Krishna.

Man is ensnared in Maya and hence the realization that Sathya Sai is God or The Divine One is not possible for all even among his devotees. As long as we give more importance to intellect than to the soul we tend to be lost in duality. Duality results in doubts and uncertainties of all kinds. As long as we try to explain God through logic we shall be unable to realize God. For Divinity is to be experienced rather than explained. And for a divine experience firm faith is the pre-requisite. So, on the spiritual plane, all devotees are on different levels of relationship with Baba. Only those who have been able to transcend the gross body have had glimpses of His Reality and such people are in constant communion with him. But such souls are difficult to find as they eschew publicity for publicity inflates ego and God disappears when ego appears.

Not even the entire teachings of Baba, not even the rarest of his miracles, can dispel the clouds of doubt from dark minds. For it is only the lamp of faith that removes darkness. And as Jesus said about the man who built his house upon the rock of faith : 'And the rain descended and the storm came and it (The house) fell not; for it was founded upon rock', (Sermon on the Mount) so, it is upto us to choose whether to found our house upon sand or upon rock.

During the past two decades many false claims of Avatarhood were made by a number of people. But the bubble always burst with time. Truth alone triumphs. Therefore, believe not hearsay but make efforts to discover the truth about Baba yourself. Also, discriminate between Siddha Purushas and Baba. Siddhis are super-human powers acquired through effort whileas Baba's power are inborn and not acquired as they have been with him since birth and have suffered no decay.

Divine Attributes

Hindu scriptures dwell upon the Divinity latent in each one of us. However, its degree differs in intensity and preponderance. In fact, the Divine Principle manifests itself in all beings as created by the One Almighty. At times, men have appeared on this earth in possession of superhuman powers beyond the ken of ordinary human beings. Such men are often termed as supermen, Yogis, Siddhas or Mahatmas. However, such men, through spiritual practices, succeed in accentuating or increasing their latent powers and are able to perform tasks that often ordinary humans are not capable of.

An Avatar, however is on a different plane. He is a human manifestation of the Divine Principle either in full or in partial possession of Godly powers and glory. His powers and capabilities are inherent and inborn and he does not need spiritual practices to acquire them. They do not decay with time or use. Performance of miracles, curing diseases or materialization or creation of objects is part of the Avatar's nature. The form of the Avatar may differ according to the compulsions of the time, period or environment. The fullness or otherwise of an Avatar is measured by the number of Kalas or attributes that he possesses. The maximum is said to be sixteen.

Avatars are of two kinds, says Baba : 'One, Amsavtar (Partial) and two, Purnavtar (Full). The partial incarnations, caught up in Maya (illusion), develop egoism and possessiveness and lead worldly lives. The Purnavtars, however, subduing and transcending Maya, manifest their full divinity to the world in their lives. The Purnavtar may behave, according to the circumstances, as if he were subject to Maya, but in fact he is free from Maya at all times. In Rama Avatar, for instance, Rama conducted himself as if he was subject to Maya, but upheld Dharma for promoting the welfare of

the world. The Krishna Avatar was different. Keeping Maya under control, Krishna manifested his 'leelas' (Miraculous deeds). He was one who had transcended the Gunas (attachment to good, bad or indifferent) but, for the sake of regeneration of the world, behaved as if he was influenced by the gunas, and delighted the world by his deeds (Baba's Discourse : Gokul Ashtmi 1990). Krishna is considered to have been Poornavtar, in possession of all the sixteen attributes.

What then are these sixteen attributes that are integral to Avatarhood ? V. K. Gokak once requested Baba to enlighten him on this point. Baba then described these to him. Five of these attributes, that he shares with animals as well as human beings are the five senses, *i.e.* sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Another four he shares with human beings. They are : mind, heart, intelligence and superconsciousness. The other seven, characteristic of Avatars only, are : Grace; Anugraha or special grace whether merited or otherwise; the power to create ; the power to sustain ; the power to destroy evil; the power to assume any form when called upon by a devotee in distress; the power to assume any name with similar efficacy. The last two name and form of an Avatar are such that whenever and wherever the name is chanted or the form meditated upon, the result is spiritual presence of the Avatar. That is why, at all Bhajan sessions, a vacant chair is placed for Baba. For has he not declared "Wherever my glory or name is sung, I shall always be present."

The natural or spontaneous expression of any of these inherent inborn powers constitutes what is called by us as a miracle. Thus the work characteristic of an Avatar is described as 'Leela' or Divine Sport. Actions of men are caused by selfish motives. An Avatar transcends the principle of cause and effect. He is totally detached, unaffected by joy or sorrow, ego or jealousy. All his actions are suprahuman for he is marked by the four Divine attributes namely omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience and omnifelicity.

Because of his attributes an Avatar always functions on a higher plane than human beings. That is why as Avatar's actions cannot be explained—nay not even understood—by ordinary human beings with their limited capacities and limited intelligence. Hence, many actions of an Avatar appear to us as miracles. What is most natural to Him seems unusual to us. His actions result

from his deep love for his creation. It is, however, necessary to differentiate the Divine 'Leelas' of an Avatar from feats performed by magicians or Siddhas. For one, an Avatar's leelas have their origin in sheer love whileas the humans have a motive of gaining money or fame. Secondly, an Avatar creates in profusion whileas Siddhas create in isolation. An Avatar always gives away what he creates; a magician never does, for, mostly, it is sleight of hand that he practices. An Avatar's powers never suffer decay, nor do they bring disaster for him as a result of too many 'leelas'; a Siddha's powers suffer decay and bring in disaster for him if put to too much use. An Avatar's actions are always beneficial, never malevolent as they result from his attributes of Grace and Omnipotence; the same cannot be said about Siddhas, for they cannot transcend human feelings and emotions. Thus it is clear that the nature and scope of an Avatar's 'Leelas' is very vast as these 'leelas' emanate from his powers of creation, preservation and destruction. Thus it is that Avatars like Sathya Sai are able to resurrect even dead men as Baba did in the case of Walter Cowan. For, he being a Poornavatar, Baba is beyond the laws that govern time, place and action.

When we come in contact with an Avatar we are thrilled, awed, wonderstruck by his miracles. But as we continue to be in his presence and study and observe his ways the very same miracles lose their awe and wonder and we realize them to be the very nature of the Avatar. Thus it is with Baba too. The miracles draw and attract us to him. But once there, we become spiritualized and pay more attention to his teachings, the miracles do give us joy but are not an end in themselves. We learn to accept an Avatar and give up our ignorant efforts to fathom his mystery. We become conscious of our human limitations only after stumbling about for quite some time. Thus we move from a stage of curiosity to acceptance and then on to Ananda or Bliss. We thank our stars for bringing us into the presence, consciousness and realization of Living God.

In the case of Baba too various scientists, proud of their knowledge and conceited in their achievements, have tried to fathom his reality. The more their effort, the greater their persistence, the greater is their failure. For the very premise that we can measure God through human equipment and intelligence is fallacious. Such men have in the end brought ridicule upon themselves. The flaw is that they try to judge Baba on the basis of the limited human know-

ledge of the laws of Nature. Baba, being an Avatar, transcends these laws and is beyond them. Moreover, an Avatar represents, perhaps, those powers, and laws of Nature which have not yet been uncovered or discovered by man. There is a basic difference between the capabilities of men, Yogis and Avatars. And as yet no equipment capable of measuring spiritual and divine powers has been invented by scientists. The mystery shall continue till such time as such an instrument is evolved. Also, there is need to explore the scope and powers of the spiritual sciences too as different from the physical sciences. Ultimately we realize the truth of what Baba says : "Your worldly intelligence cannot fathom the ways of God. He cannot be recognized by mere cleverness of intelligence. You may benefit from God but you cannot explain Him. You cannot understand the nature of my reality either today, or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent enquiry, even if all mankind joins in the effort."

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"Believe that all hearts are motivated by the One and Only God ; that all faiths glorify the One and Only God ; that all names in all languages and all Forms man can conceive, denote the One and Only God ; His adoration is best done by means of Love. Cultivate that Eke-bhava (that attitude of Oneness) between men of all creeds, all countries and all continents. This is the Message of Love, I bring. This is the Message I wish you to take to heart."

—BABA

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VI, p. 246.

Cosmic Consciousness

"Every Avatar is an amazing phenomenon. Not to recognize the Avatar is equally a matter for amazement. Even more astonishing of all is the incapacity to experience the presence of the Avatar. Most astonishing of all is to be in the presence of Lord and feel miserable. To be in the proximity of the Avatar, to sing and sport with the Avatar and yet fail to understand the truth of the Avatar is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. When the Avatatic principle is understood, you experience real bliss."

Baba—14-8-90

When the Divine Principle descends on the earth in human form it is not possible for all to be aware of it. As is stated by Baba in the quotation given above, it is quite possible that people may be in the Avatar's proximity and presence without realizing that they are in the presence of the Cosmic Form. There is also a psychological block that hinders us from accepting anyone associated with us as anything but human. A very large number of the residents of Puttaparthi still refuse to accept Baba as God while as millions from around the world rush there to worship him. It is estimated that on Baba's sixtieth birthday, i.e. the 23rd of Nov., 1990 a record number of nine lakh devotees were present for Baba's Darshan. Also, between 18th and 24th of Nov., 90 nearly 22 lakh pilgrims visited Prasanthi Nilayam.

According to Baba all this is caused by delusion or Maya. Because we identify ourselves and others totally with the body, delusion or 'Mithya' results. Basing ourselves on this 'Mithya' we give up Sathya or Truth. The Real is only One. But as long as the mind and body remain, it is difficult to recognise or experience it. However, all those who are or have been in constant touch, presence or, awareness of Baba are in different states and stages of

consciousness. To some his reality becomes evident in the very first Darshan, some become aware of his cosmic Form gradually with gathering experience while to some even after whole decades of spiritual effort even a glimpse of his real self is not granted.

Why is it so ? Perhaps there are two aspects that determine the results of our effort. One, is the amount of spiritual effort, meditation, that we put in, our feelings and faith. Over these we can exercise some degree of control. The other, more important aspect, is our Karma of previous births. Over this we have, today, no control. Both, together, in the author's opinion, determine not only the extent to which we can advance in our realization of God, but also the amount of grace that God, or His Avatar, showers on us. On the one hand there are people who deny the very concept of God or an Avatar. On the other there are others to whom the rituals assume so much importance that they lose sight of the ultimate objective. Then, there are who those try to cognize God only through the five senses; to them gross experience is the only true experience. How can God, being subtle, be cognized through the gross body. The subtle body is first to be discovered and accepted before any kind of subtle experience or reality can be cognized. Thus different people who approach Baba with different attitudes and accumulated Karma are rewarded differently. Even the attitudes are largely determined by Karma and spiritual effort. Just as the beauty and splendour of the world cannot be visible to the blind, similarly the glory and grace of God cannot be cognized by those who are not endowed with the proper vision. Faith, of course, is the prerequisite.

Moreover, one has to get rid of prejudices, to experience truth. Often it is that we approach an Avatar like Baba with preconceived notions or prejudices. Or we expect him to behave or perform as we tell him to. How can, then, we hope for him to reveal his true identity. The least we can do is to approach him with an open mind. There are many instances of people who were devotees of Rama Krishna (N. Kasturi) or Aurobindo (V. K. Gokak) before they came to Baba. Realizing Baba's divinity they were troubled with a dilemma—whether to give-up their previous beliefs. Baba himself helped them rescue from out of this duality, till they realized the truth of Baba's statement : "Call me by any name or form, for all names and forms are mine."

People who become aware of Baba's divinity are often faced with a dilemma. Before this point of time most of them have

already worshipped or adored some name or form of God or Guru. Now, they ask themselves, should we drop our earlier faith and replace it with Baba. 'You need not do so at all to reach me', says Baba. 'See me in that very form and address me by that very name', says he, 'for all names and forms are one'. There are cases in which the devotees prayed to their Gurus or the form that they worshipped, to lead them to truth and to guide them what to do. And they received visions guiding them to the living Divinity of Sathya Sai Baba. To N. Kasturi Baba gave visions in which he saw Sri Rama Krishna Pranhansa as Sathya Sai and vice versa. Similar visions were also granted to V. K. Gokak who was earlier a disciple of Aurobindo. Thus 'Mithya' (Delusion) was dispelled and Sathya (truth) was established.

What then is needed for understanding an Avatar's true and cosmic form are the good deeds of previous births, firm faith, intense spiritual effort, as well as a loving and objective approach and vision. Apart from these what really matters utmost is the grace of the Avatar himself—in our case of our beloved Baba—without which not even a glimpse of his True Form is possible. And to obtain this grace three things are necessary: firm faith, total surrender and constant prayer. Of these three, prayer is the most effective and potent. Many foreigners who came to India in search of Godman met with disappointment initially but when they prayed to God to lead them to Him, He led them to Baba, who, after constant prayers, revealed His Cosmic Form to them. The experiences of such devotees inspire others, urge them on in their efforts to reach God, and strengthen their faith in Baba. With this purpose we bring to the readers a few experiences of some eminent devotees. (From 'The Golden Age'—1979, 1980 Published by Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust.)

In his article titled 'The Ocean of Grace and Bliss', Justice V. B. Eradi of the Supreme Court of India says: "Words cannot adequately describe even a minute fraction of His Infinite Glory, nor can the human mind ever comprehend Baba's real nature since he is not governed by the rules of science as known to man. He transcends all limitations of time, space etc. and is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient." He goes on to narrate his own experiences of Baba's Divinity and concludes that "By example and precept, Baba guides you all the time along the sacred path which leads to true realization and liberation, illuminating it by sparkles of the

gems of wisdom emanating from His Divine Being. And when wisdom begins to dawn, you see him as the Perfect Incarnation of the Supreme Lord—for whose Darshan eminent Rishis and great yogis had to do austere 'tapas' for many long years. You then realize how exceptionally fortunate you and others of the present generation are to be blessed with the very rare and precious privilege of being on this earth as contemporaries of a Paripoorna Avatar with plentiful opportunity to experience the bliss of his Darshan, Spars-han and Sambhashan (Sight, Touch and Conversation)."

In his article titled "The Avatar's Time-Clock' Justice Eradi exclaims : "How very fortunate we are to be blessed with the rare privilege of being on this earth as contemporaries of this Divine Avatar and coming directly under his merciful and loving care, guidance and protection ! If I may strike a personal note, it was only after I was mercifully drawn to Bhagwan Baba in August 1963, that my life became meaningful and acquired a positive direction and purpose. On our installing Him in our hearts and surrendering ourselves to His care, Swami takes over complete charge of matters concerning our welfare (material as well as spiritual) provided we constantly endeavour to be worthy of His love."

Justice (Retd) V. R. Krishna Iyer is an old devotee of Baba. He has had the good fortune of receiving Baba's grace many times. In his article 'God Fulfils Himself' the learned judge says : Bhagwan Baba is a boon to our generation. Where he walks is hallowed ground ; where he sits is shrine ; and where his name is chanted, tuned to cosmic vibrations, is divine presence. His doings challenge the grosser science, may be, but his teachings vitalize our cultural heritage. His message of compassion, his profound emphasis on high values and his teachings vitalize our cultural heritage. His message of compassion, his profound emphasis on high values and his human-divine expression of Truth elevate our emotions and refine our inner being.... The supreme realization in personalized incarnation is Baba.'

Justice P. N. BHAGWATI, ex-chief justice of the Supreme Court of India, also concludes his article 'Baba—Love Incarnate' on a similar note. Says he : "The greatest and the most convincing characteristic of an Avatar is its capacity to transform human beings. Baba has this capacity in a supreme and unprecedented measure. Everyone who has the good fortune to be in his divine presence experiences the deep and profound impact of his per-

sonality. One is enveloped in such a highly charged aura of love in his presence, such a profoundly spiritual and holy atmosphere that many are transformed on the spot. And almost everyone coming into his presence can feel this deeply moving climate. He radiates peace and in his presence all agitations of the mind cease, all anxieties vanish and one is submerged in an ocean of bliss."

In this article Mr. Justice Bhagwati also talks about people who try to vilify Baba out of sheer spite without trying to know even the basic facts about him. In fact it is an unscientific, irrelevant and illogical attitude that some people begin to criticize Baba without even observing him or without having had any experience about him. But all the efforts of such people to belittle Baba bring only love and compassion from him. For "he is an Avatar who is conscious of his Divinity and lives constantly in a state of identification with pure consciousness."

The eminent jurist NANI PALKHIVALA who was formerly the Indian Ambassador to U.S.A. has this to say about Baba : "Bhagwan Baba's great perception enables him to look at the Spirit, the universe and the spiritual values which alone can re-generate this nation. The whole nation should be grateful to such a great moral and spiritual force who has dedicated his whole life to the service of mankind. And that is why he is sought after by millions. Enormous gatherings offer homage to him wherever he goes; and the strength of our country lies in this spontaneous realization of the spirit over mere material prosperity.

"I am deeply touched by Bhagwan's great love for all of us and by the momentous work that he is doing for the regeneration of the Indian nation. By His efforts India will become what Sri Aurobindo predicted : 'the great Moral Leader of the World. 'These views of Palkhivala find expression in his article titled 'Our Ancient Heritage'.

His excellency Sri Govind Narain, retired I.C.S. officer and former Governor of Karnataka in his article 'Grains of Grace' says that it is a unique experience to watch Baba "moving through multitudes of crowds—a picture of all love and compassion, raising his right hand to bless one and all, saying a few words to someone here and someone there, and giving his famous Vibhuti to those needing and deserving it. People go to him with all kinds of worries, troubles and problems, and full of tensions, but it is a

common experience which we certainly do share, that his mere presence dispels all those tensions and his benign smiling face makes us forget all the worries, troubles and problems, and there is a peculiar experience of being in the presence of one who at once is so simple, childlike, soft-spoken, compassionate and full of love, and at the same who is so mighty and powerful and has full answers for all the doubts and worries one may have. There is no doubt that Bhagwan is the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance that surrounds, restricts and imprisons the thought. He is all light, all illumination, all knowledge, all love, all benevolence and benediction rolled into one."

"Man is born in joy, for joy, in Ananda and for Ananda... This Ananda is like benediction, a gift, something like a heavenly breeze which energises and illumines our path in knowing the Atman and abiding in that consciousness. Baba is verily Ananda-data, the bestower of Ananda;" this is the opinion of Sri R. R. Diwakar who was at one time a minister in the Union Cabinet and later on Governor of Bihar. He is the author of several books on spirituality concerning Sri Aurbindo, Ramakrishna, Buddha etc. In his 'Reflections' on Baba, Sri Diwakar writes that when people ask him as to what he thinks of Baba and what his opinion about Baba is, he simply tells them that he cannot think of Baba, that he *feels* him, his presence, his overwhelming presence'. If somebody presses him hard, he tells him: "You go and ask the hundreds and thousands who wait for hours to have a glimpse of him. They are not of the same class as the superstitious masses who go to temples and bathe in rivers and feel gratified that their sins are gone. Most of them who are devotees, are highly educated, doctors, engineers, professors, legislators, ministers, scholars and what not. They come from long distances and have hardly any time to spare. They are not the ones who could be deluded or persuaded by mere miracles. They think, they feel that it is worthwhile standing and waiting for Darshan. That itself is their Tapas (penance). Nor are they all stricken with grief or suffering from some maladies. His healing powers are available no doubt. But he is more a mender of souls." What Sri Diwakar has said about Baba embodies not only his ideas but is the spontaneous overflow based on personal experience. His views are proof of the veracity of Babas claim: "I am the repairer of broken hearts, damaged minds, diseased feelings and twisted fancies. I am the Smith who welds, mends and moulds."

Retired Air Chief Marshal Sri O. P. Mehra held the high position of Governor of Rajasthan for a few years. He too is convinced of the Divinity of Baba and feels that all languages are inadequate to express what Baba is. In his article 'Baba and His Message' Sri Mehra talks of his 'shortcomings, limitations and incompetence' that hinder him from expressing an opinion about Baba. He feels that "this is due to the fact that He is no ordinary mortal. He is an Avatar. He is all-knowing and His message—Love—has all the ingredients which He Himself and sages and scholars of the past have handed down to us in the form of scriptures, folklore and other words." This is what Sri Mehra says in his article on Baba and His Message.

Highlighting the qualities of all-encompassing love and compassion that Baba possesses Shri Mehra further says: "The history of mankind is replete with examples of a "Tathagata" (incarnation) having taken birth to set the world on the path of righteousness. We are fortunate to live in an age when such a phenomenon is being staged by Him for the good of mankind. It is for us to take advantage of His presence which we can best do by acting in accordance with His teachings."

Not only is Baba The Divine One to the Hindus but men of other religions too have proclaimed that he is the One and only God. Thus Christians like Hislop and Indira Devi, Muslims like Prof. Bashiruddin, Parsis like Fanibunda, Jains like Ranjan Jain, all consider him to be the manifestation of the Divine Principle. Reverend Robert Earl Pipes—a famous Christian missionary of America—is convinced of 'The Oneness of Jesus Christ and Sathya Sai Baba'. After a systematic comparative study of the lives and messages of Christ and Baba Pipes draws the conclusion that the activities of Jesus Christ, i.e. his miracles etc. his mission and teachings have since been paralleled and surpassed in human history by Sathya Sai Baba only. Pipes believes that Baba has come "honouring the Son Jesus Christ and also doing the greater works which Jesus prophesied of those who believe in him. But the Son is not here today incarnated in human form.... The Divine Mother—Divine Father has incarnated; the embodiment is Sathya Sai Baba. Whoever has seen Baba has also seen Jesus Christ. For they are one and the same and it makes no difference whether one prays to Jesus Christ or Sathya Sai Baba."

Rev. Canon John Rossner is an Anglican priest of Canada, and is also a professor of comparative religions. He has published many

research papers and books on religion and spirituality. In his article 'The Priest and the Avatar' he has recounted how he was drawn to Baba and recognized in him the active Power of God and the universal notes of the Presence of God. He first came to know of Baba in 1977 when he came to India as a guest lecturer on the topic of 'Yoga and Physical Discoveries'. While in India he heard much about Baba and also met a couple of people who were bitter critics of Baba. Rejecting prejudice as an unscientific approach to scientific discovery he decided to find out the truth himself. He obtained some books on Baba from V. K. Gokak and read them.

Rossner went back to Canada. Over the next two years Baba visited Rossner and his wife many times in dreams and helped them out of many problems. This confirmed their faith in Baba. In 1979 he wrote a letter to Baba seeking permission to visit his abode in Prasanthi Nilayam. He reached there on 13th of Nov., 1979 along with a group of thirty five people. His experiences with Baba during this visit convinced him of Baba's divinity and he became staunch devotee and totally surrendered to him. He has written in his article on Baba that "As a Christian priest I easily recognized the universal Christ in this mortal form of Baba."

Confronted by the question how Rossner, as a Christian priest, approached a Hindu Guru or Avatar to ask for his help, his spiritual power and grace to accomplish things in his own Christian vocation, Rossner has this to say: "In the first place, I am not just a Christian priest and Sathya Sai Baba is not just a Hindu Guru or Avatar... Sathya Sai Baba is already a Universal Man who embodies the One God...Sathya Sai Baba is truly a God Man."

Victor Kanu is Secretary to the Commonwealth of Churches. He begins his article 'My Spiritual Journey To Sathya Sai Baba' with the following remarks: "The aim of this article is not to ridicule or condemn any religion. The article attempts to show my spiritual journey beginning with African Traditional Religion and ending with Sathya Sai Baba, the present divine incarnation. It is not an article of disappointment and abuse. The truth must be said as I see it in my long spiritual journey. I have reached the end of the road. My spiritual search is over. I have found my God—Sathya Sai Baba, who is now and will forever be the sole object of my desire."

Victor Kanu first heard of Baba in late 1978. Since then the very direction of his life and his spiritual search was transformed.

He first heard of Baba through a church address delivered by Ursula Roberts who compared Christ with Baba. This created in Kanu an eagerness to know more about Baba. He discovered fascinating information in several books that he read. When he read about miracles performed by Baba he was stricken with doubts. This caused confusion. Finally, on 3rd February 1980 he prayed as follows before going to bed : "Oh Sai Baba ! I do not know you. You live all the way in India. I have learnt a lot about you from books and from people. From what I have read and been told, and after a very careful consideration, I have no doubt whatsoever, that you are God Incarnate. My wife and I would like to be your devotees. If you accept us, please give me a sign."

That very night Baba appeared to him in a dream at 1:15 A.M. He saw Baba with his bushy hair sitting on his table. The lights went off. He felt as if a powerful and overwhelming force had entered his room. Even in sleep he cried out :

Oh Jesus help us !

Oh God help us !

Sai Baba help us !

When he woke up he realized that Baba had answered his prayer and that Christ, God and Baba are one. Tears of joy flowed from his eyes. Immediately after this incident Kanu went to the Sai Centre in South London and joined it. Baba visited him in many dreams. When he visited India in 1980 he got an interview with Baba on 13th of August. Baba solved many of his personal problems and guided him. He concludes his article thus : "Baba's coming into my life has made me accept, respect and revere the essence of all religions and forms of worship because "They all lead to God." He has opened my eyes and understanding of God's scheme of things; of the authenticity and significance of Divine Incarnations; of the purpose of life and how to fulfil that purpose."

People of all races and religions are Baba's devotees. One such is Dr. Bashiruddin, a Muslim, who is head of the Communication and Journalism Dept of Osmania University in Hyderabad. He has been a devotee of Baba for more than a decade. In his article 'A Testament of Faith' he recounts how he was influenced by Baba and became his devotee. When Howard Murphet's new book 'Sai Baba : Avatar' was published he wished to read it and tried to get a copy. He enquired at many book-shops but was not successful. Later, when he went to Prasanthi Nilayam, a Seva Dal worker came

running to him and, giving him a copy of the book, said that Baba had sent it. The book had been autographed by Baba. Though Bashiruddin had not talked to anyone about his desire to read the book yet Baba was aware of his latent desire. He recalls many other incidents too.

Although Prof. Bashiruddin is a true devotee of Baba, Baba constantly tells him to have faith in and to follow his own religion. Once he requested Baba to give him a 'mantra'. Baba replied that he had already given him one. So saying he pointed to Bashiruddin's locket which had 'Allah' printed on it. Baba's impact enriches and confirms each person's faith in his own religion and they begin have a greater and better understanding of the same.

Dr. E. B. Fanibunda is a Parsi and a famous medical doctor of Bombay. He is member of The Royal Society of Magicians and is himself proficient in magic. Armed with cameras and all sorts of equipment he went to Baba to 'expose' his 'sleight of hand' and 'magic'. After careful scrutiny and prolonged observation he was convinced that Baba is not a magician but a genuine Avatar. Fanibunda is a devotee of twenty years' standing and his book 'Vision of the Divine' is one of most comprehensive books with beautiful photographs taken by himself. He is often asked as to what religion Baba professes. His answer is in Baba's own words "All religions are mine. You need not give up your religion to take up a new one. You can worship any form of God according to your own customs and traditions. Call me by any name or form for all names and forms are mine". Accordingly, Fanibunda is a devout Zorashtrian.

In this chapter the author has tried to present the views of different people from various walks of life initiated into different faiths and religions. What is common to all of them is their firm faith that Baba is The Divine One. Thus they are all united by a realization or consciousness of the Cosmic Form of Baba. Taking into account the authenticity and veracity of these first-person accounts the reader may perhaps be inspired to initiate his own enquiry leading him to the Cosmic One. An effort has also been made to throw light on the different facets of the present Avatar through a compilation of experiences of so many people. However, the Vedas say about God : 'Neti Neti', meaning that God's glory has no limitations. Baba has millions of devotees spread around the globe and each one has his own individual experiences of his Divinity which is the basis of his or her faith in him.

I would like to close this chapter with a couple of quotations from my friend Shri R. Mohan Rai. In his book 'Satya Sai Avatar : Glimpses of Divinity' he says : "Life, under Baba's influence acquires a meaning and becomes iridescent with divine colours. Desires begin to lose their pungency. With the passing of each day the desire to be nearer to Him becomes more strong. Sadhana becomes the luminous arch where through the Light shines drawing the seeker towards it. First, he sees himself in the Light; then he sees the Light in himself; and finally, he becomes the Light. That is the state of egoless Supreme Bliss." And Shri Rai is of the opinion that "If there is a Heaven at all, then it is Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi in India, where in has incarnated The Lord in human form, with promise that all seekers of God shall be blessed and drenched in the nectar of His love. Go, ye, then, seek, and be blessed; for life is short and time is fleeting and procrastination is the thief of time."



"He (god) gives ear to the wailings of every being. In fact, suffering entitles you more to the grace of Lord. When suffering comes in waves one behind the other, be glad that the shore is near; bear them bravely; do not like cowards throw the blame on some outside Power or develop dislike for the Lord."

—BABA

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. II, p. 165.

Miracles Experienced by Devotees

"You must have heard people say that mine is all magic. But the manifestation of Divine Power must not be interpreted in terms of magic. Magicians play their tricks for earning their maintenance, worldly fame and wealth. They are based on falsehood and they thrive on deceit, but this Body could never stoop to such a low level. This Body has come through the Lord's resolve to come. That resolve is intended to uphold the Sathya, or Truth. Divine resolve is always true resolve. Remember there is nothing that Divine Power cannot accomplish. It can transmute earth into sky and sky into earth. To doubt this is to prove that you are too weak to grasp great things, the grandeur of the universe."

—Baba

Each one of the devotees of Baba has reposed his faith on the basis of his own experiences. These experiences are as varied and wonderful as their infinite number, and range from extraordinary to wonderful to miraculous. It is an experience in itself to listen to devotees recounting these miracles as they highlight the innumerable aspects and manifestations of Baba's Divinity. Though their number runs into millions, an effort is made in this chapter to present a cross-section of such experiences. The people chosen are from different strata of society for the simple reason that the accounts may be representative of all sections. A salient feature that comes out is the fact that some of these staunch devotees were sceptical towards Baba or were his vociferous critics. In many cases these people progressed from curiosity and eagerness to belief and then to faith and devotion because of miraculous events in their personal lives. I have undertaken to narrate some such events from the lives of various people with a view to inspiring those who may be in the initial stages of curiosity and eagerness.

"I shall have no truck with Babas", was the initial reaction of an industrialist Shri P. Agrawala of Calcutta when his friend suggested that they both should go for Darshan of Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Whitefield near Bangalore. He rejected the very idea outright but within two years of this rejection he was so 'charmed' by Baba that he has left his permanent abode in Calcutta and has settled down in Baba's Abode of Peace (Prasanthi Nilayam) where he says he shall continue to live till his last breath.

When the author visited Prasanthi Nilayam he met Mr. Agrawala for the first time. Though Nilayam teems with people from all parts of the world yet Rajasthani traders or Marwaris as they are called are very few. Hence when I saw this man in shirt and 'dhoti' I was eager to gain acquaintance. Later a sort of affinity developed between us as he too belong to Sikar district of Rajasthan to which my ancestors belonged. Mr. Agrawala is a simple, unassuming amiable person whose transparent sincerity casts its spell on all and sundry. He has firm faith in and deep devotion for Baba who has showered his benedictions on Mr. Agrawala on many occasions. I interviewed him at his residence in Prasanthi Nilayam on 12.7.87. His experiences, as recounted to me, are reproduced below. But first, a short biographical sketch of Mr. Agrawala.

Born in 1915 in Laxmangarh town of Sikar, Shri Agrawala belongs to the Bagria family. His father Shri Kedar Mal Bagria migrated to Assam long ago and took up a small business there. The son Dwarika Prasad studied upto fifth class in his native village before shifting to Gauhati from where he passed his matriculation. For some time he studied at Calcutta College of Commerce but had to give up studies due to compelling family circumstances. Mr. Agrawala met with great success in his business ventures and set up factories not only in Assam but also in Calcutta and Bangalore.

In his youth Mr. Agrawala was drawn to Gandhi and adopted the Gandhian way of life after a thorough study of his philosophy through Gandhi's writings. This inclination made him somewhat of an idealist. He is a staunch opponent of superstition, obscurantism and meaningless ritualism. He hates those who exploit people for their selfish ends in the name of religion but always had an inclination towards charity, service and other benevolent activities.

In 1980 when he visited Bangalore one of his old employees suggested a visit to Baba's abode at Whitefield. But Mr. Agrawala rejected the proposal outright. Soon he met Dr. Hazra who owned

a chemicals' factory at Bangalore. Mr. Agrawala's son Kailash had entered into an agreement to buy the said factory. Kailash had sealed the agreement with a paltry token payment of one hundred Rupees only. Ridiculous as it may seem, Mr. Hazra had accepted the sum as a token of the sale. But thereby hung a tale as Mr. Hazra later revealed to Mr. Agrawala.

Mr. Hazra was then an old devotee of Baba with his feet firmly planted on the bedrock of faith. His Chemicals' factory was a venture of long standing. But once Baba said to him : "How long will you continue to be ensnared in the factory ? Will you not liberate yourself ?" To Mr. Hazra this was a clear edict to sell the factory. He was in search of a good customer when Mr. Agrawala met him. After initial talks with Kailash, Dr. Hazra met Baba and sought his guidance. Baba said to Hazra : 'He is a good man. I have sent him. Give him the factory.' Thus it was that he sold off his factory to the son of Mr. Agrawala.

It was this firm faith of Dr. Hazra in Baba that set Mr. Agrawala thinking. Baba's remarks about him made him curious and eager to know more about him. As a first step he immediately took to studying all published books etc. about Baba...The incredible and miraculous personality as revealed through this study led him to faith. He started visiting Whitefield for Darshan. Soon he took up quarters at Whitefield to be able to have as much Darshan as possible. He was eager for an interview but whenever he expressed this wish Baba said : 'Wait ! Wait !'

Ultimately, after a 'wait' of about two years the blessed moment arrived on the first of May, 1983. He was accompanied by his wife, son Kailash and his wife. This interview cleared all cobwebs and Mr. Agrawala became a firm devotee of Baba. Baba told him that he was happy at the good work and service activities that Mr. Agrawala had performed in Assam. He knew of the scholarships etc. that Mr. Agrawala had instituted for poor students. In fact he knew of all the important events of Mr. Agrawala's life. Baba knew even those half-forgotten events of his life about which he had never talked to anyone. Mr. Agrawala was convinced of Baba's Omniscience. Finally, as a token of love Baba materialized a ring for him and a locket for his wife.

I asked Mr. Agrawala to elaborate upon his activities in Assam which Baba had appreciated. He told me that he had founded The Bagria Charitable Trust, Bagria Educational Trust, Steel Works

Public Welfare Trust and the Kedarmal Charitable Trust etc. for the assistance and welfare of thousands of needy people. He has also built a school and a charitable hospital in his native village of Laxmangarh. These service activities had drawn praise from Baba as Baba himself teaches that service to man is service to God.

Mr. Agrawala narrated many other incidents as proof of Baba's omniscience. Once he went to Prasanthi Nilayam with two thousand Rupees set apart for Narayana Seva. When no one from among the organizers accepted the money he decided to keep the amount in an envelope and offer it to Baba for Narayana Seva. Meanwhile he took away five hundred rupees for his personal use from the amount. Later, when he offered the packet to Baba, without even touching it Baba said : 'Very clever, Very clever. Stole five hundred.' Astounded, Mr. Agrawala blurted out that he intended to give the money later. Baba said "I know, I know."

On another occasion Baba was to leave Prasanthi Nilayam for Bangalore. Mr. Agrawala decided to follow him in his car. But his departure was delayed as the washerman brought his clothes late. Next day Baba asked him : 'When did you come ?' Agrawala replied, 'Yesterday, along with you Baba.' But Baba retorted : 'Why, no ! Were you not bothered by the washerman ?' So, while physically Baba was on his way to Bangalore, he knew all about Agrawala's predicament.

Once in Calcutta Mr. Agrawala's son reprimanded his own son for taking away his car without asking him. As they both entered into a heated argument Mr. Agrawala came out to pacify both. A few months later when he visited Prasanthi Nilayam Baba said to him : Grandson quarrels with son over use of Maruti. I was standing there itself on the landing of the staircase.'

These are some of the incidents that have convinced Mr. Agrawala of Baba's Divinity. Also, there are many instances of Baba curing terrible diseases of members of the family and coming to their aid in times of distress.

Prof. N. Kasturi who died in August 1987 after attaining the ripe old age of ninety years was at one time lecturer in History at Mysore University. He was unacquainted with Baba for the first decades of his life. In 1947 Kasturi's youngest son all of a sudden became very ill and after nine days of illness passed away despite all efforts to save him. The untimely death of a brilliant young son of eighteen shattered Prof. Kasturi totally.

The son's classmate Gopi was shocked at the untimely demise of his friend and started for Bangalore to condole his death. He broke journey at Puttaparthi to meet Baba. When he told Baba of his friend's death Baba gave him Vibhuti packets for the bereaved parents. Gopi requested Prof. Kasturi to apply Vibhuti on his visage as it would enable him to bear this grave loss. Gopi lauded Baba as a Divine Avatar, though only twentyone years of age, in his human form. Kasturi was not impressed and said that when his own God had forsaken him no other God could help, and refused to accept the Vibhuti packets.

A little later Kasturi met another friend Potti Aiyer. He too narrated Baba's miracles and suggested that his miseries would end if he took Baba's Vibhuti. But Kasturi was an ardent devotee of Swami Ramakrishna and was against entertaining miracle-men. Hence he remained unconvinced. To him even the word 'Sai' was a red rag as in Kannada dialect it meant 'go and be damned'. Added to that a friend has gone for Darshan to Shirdi and had died a week thereafter.

Potti Aiyer's grandson was a promising young man and Kasturi longed for him as son-in-law for daughter Padma. Hence, in spite of all his reservations, Kasturi accompanied Potti Aiyer on his pilgrimage to Puttaparthi only in the fond hope of pleasing his friend. Even after Darshan he remained unimpressed. On his way back he said to his wife that although he had no faith in Baba, Aiyer was an ardent devotee. So, if Baba told Aiyer, he would surely agree to the matrimonial alliance between his daughter and Aiyer's grandson. All earlier efforts of Kasturi to persuade Aiyer towards this alliance had failed till then and the latter had been trying to get the marriage of Kasturi's daughter settled elsewhere.

All arrangement for the betrothal of Kasturi's daughter with this other match were made when, just a day earlier, Baba appeared to Potti Aiyer in his dream and told him to meet him immediately. Potti Aiyer rushed to Bhagwan Baba only to be chided for not accepting Kasturi's proposal. He told him to marry his grandson to Padma and poor Aiyer ran back to Kasturi to request him to give Padma to him as daughter-in-law. He was just in time before the other party arrived and Kasturi's joy knew no bounds at this sudden turn of events.

'After the betrothal Kasturi went to Baba for Darshan. Baba then told him : 'You prayed to me that I should tell Potti Aiyer to

accept your daughter as daughter-in-law. I fulfilled your wish. Be happy ! I also know of your young son's death that has plunged you into grief. You are also upset that in spite of being so very qualified you are earning a pittance as Lecturer in a small college. Don't despair; all will be well soon.'

Kasturi was worried about the expenses to be incurred at the ensuing marriage of his daughter. So he requested Baba that the marriage be performed in his Ashram. Baba not only agreed but himself got the marriage performed. One event led to another and Kasturi by and by got so attached to Baba that he himself did not know when he became an ardent devotee.

Kasturi soon got elevated to the post of Principal and after retirement settled down in Prasanthi Nilayam where he served Baba as his personal attendant-secretary till his death. Great tasks awaited him in the service of Sai. For forty years he had the opportunity to watch and observe the 'leelas' (Divine sport) of Baba most closely. The result was the four-part biography titled 'Satyam Sivam Sundaram' which is considered the most authentic chronicle of events related with Baba. He wrote many other books too, the most notable being 'Loving God' and 'Eswaramma'. He started publishing 'Sanathana Sarathi.' The first issue of this wonderful magazine was released on Maha Sivarathri day in 1958 and Kasturi continued to be its editor for thirty long years.

If any one person ever was witness to thousands of miracles performed by Baba, it was Kasturi. These miracles had their dimensions in time, space and distance revealing the cosmic form of Baba. Here I mention the first miracle witnessed by him as it transformed his attitude and understanding of Baba.

After his daughter Padma's marriage Kasturi sought Baba's permission to return home. Baba told him to stay for one day more and Kasturi did accordingly. Later, the same evening he learnt that Baba would be going to the banks of Chitravathi along with the devotees for a session of late evening Bhajans. Two eminent devotees from Madras also joined the small group of blissful devotees that Baba led for Bhajans that moonlit evening.

On reaching the basin of river Chitravathi Baba asked the devotees from Madras : 'Where shall we sit ?' and he selected a clean patch of sand. Baba sat down and the devotees sat in a semi-circle around him. Bhajans followed. The Bhajans over, Baba told the devotees from Madras to make up a pile of sand. They

did as bid. Then Baba patted the small mound and declared : 'Lord Ganpati has arrived'. So saying he pulled out a beautiful silver idol of Ganesa from out of the pile of sand. The idol was ten inches tall and the way it was materialized left absolutely no grounds for doubt in the mind of Kasturi. Baba gave away the idol to the devotees from Madras. For Kasturi, seeing became believing. It was much later that to him miracles became the natural sport of the Divine One causing joy but no awe or bewilderment. He went home convinced of Baba's Avatarhood.

INDU LAL SHAH is a renowned chartered accountant and social worker of Bombay. From 1951 to 1960 he was the Secretary for Bombay of the Indian National Congress. He also worked as Deputy Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission from 1949 to 1964. He had the occasion to come in contact with Baba in 1965 when he went to Bangalore. His friend there—with whom Indu Bhai was staying—asked him if he would accompany him to listen to a discourse by Baba. Overcoming his initial hesitation he agreed and was amazed at the large gathering turned out for Baba's Darshan. Indu Bhai's wife Mrs. Sarla Shah, who later became the moving spirit behind the Bal Vikas movement, also accompanied her husband.

When Indu Bhai reached Whitefield the sky was heavily overcast and ready to burst forth with rain. So he reversed his car in readiness to return. Just then Baba emerged and pointing to the clouds, said something. To the devotees he said, 'I have told the clouds to go away and now it won't rain. So, you can sit without worrying about getting wet'. To Indu Bhai this declaration seemed incredible but soon the clouds melted away. He had read of such happenings only in religious books. Seeing it happening was mind boggling.

Indu Bhai and his wife started visiting Baba's Ashram daily. On the fifth day Baba called them for private audience during which he was convinced that Baba already knew all about him and his activities. After sometime Baba visited Bombay. During the interval Indu Bhai had got ready an exhibition for schools. He wanted Baba to inaugurate the exhibition—Sant Darshan. When he went to meet Baba the latter did not allow him to say anything and asked : 'Where is the Exhibition ?' This convinced Indu Bhai of Baba's omniscience.

Indu Bhai later went on to become the Convener of the World Council of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations. Once Indu Bhai attended a meeting of the Organization at Madras. Baba presided. The other members present were all Telugu knowing. So they conversed in Telugu. Only Indu Bhai did not know that language. When someone asked if he needed the proceedings to be translated into English, Baba said ; 'No need. He understands Telugu'. Baba then patted his head and from that moment onwards Indu Bhai was able to follow all the deliberations being carried on in Telugu. Indu Bhai has been a dedicated devotee for the last twentyfive years and has written some good books such as 'We Devotees' and 'Sixteen Spiritual Summers'.

T.A. PAI was Minister for Railways in the Govt. of India. Writing about Baba (Golden Age—1979—P 52) he says : "For a long time I had resisted every opportunity to meet Sri Sathya Sai Baba." When he was Chairman cum M.D. of Syndicate Bank he used to travel from Bangalore to Anantapur by road. But whenever his Manager asked him to visit Puttaparthi, and meet Baba he used to tell him : "I don't believe in all these things." Also, whenever he saw people's homes with Baba's pictures and devotees in surrender he thought it was almost foolish.

This very Pai had a sudden impulse to call on Baba when he was staying in Bangalore for a week in 1972. So he sent word to Baba through a friend. Baba gave him an appointment for 4 P. M. At 3 P. M. Mr. K.R. Puri, who was to succeed T.A. Pai as Chairman of L. I. C., called on him. "I suggested his accompanying me to Baba", says Pai, "Baba was not aware of his coming, but as soon as Mr. Puri touched his feet even before I had introduced him, Baba patted him on his back and said, "Puri, Puri, how are you ?" This was the first surprise I had."

"Later on, after tea, He sat with us and blessed us with his benedictory interview. During the interview, I just mentioned about my nephew, in the United States; and no sooner did I mention his name than Baba said that the child had been shown to doctors and that the parents of the child had recently been to Shirdi with the child and given him Vibhuti." He was assured that his nephew would get well soon.

Baba also told him about many details of his life and assured him protection. Subsequently, on many occasions he had the opportunity to witness miracles performed by Baba. His faith became

firm through the many events of his life that confirmed to him Baba's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. He has written about these miracles in his article on Baba in the Golden Age—79.

Mr. T.A. Pai recollects that one day in Bombay while Baba was sitting with him and some others a lady was brought on a stretcher. Baba got up and went into the ante-room and asked the stretcher to be brought over there. After a short time all present were amazed when they saw her coming out of the room with slow steps walking and getting down the steps. She had been suffering from paralysis for the last six or seven years. Baba assured that she would be all right thereafter.

One of the most interesting experiences recorded by Mr. Pai is about a Japanese friend Mr. Kajitha. His four year old daughter Rikki was a retarded child. She would not sleep at night. Mr. Pai got some Vibhuti and gave it to Mr. Kajitha telling him that the child could recover with Baba's blessings. He was also given a photograph of Baba. Three months later Kajitha returned to India and told Pai that his wife had a dream in which she saw an Indian saint telling her that the child would be all right. Kajitha wanted Pai to take him to Puttaparthi. There, Baba materialized some pills and gave them to Kajitha assuring him that the child would be all right.

After about a year with the child apparently not much better, the Kajithas returned to Baba. On return from Puttaparthi the Kajithas visited Pai and told him that Baba took the child to his room and, taking the child by hand, asked her to walk and the child started taking steps. Before they left India the child started taking food. Soon she became nearly normal. Mr. Pai concludes his article with the following remarks about Baba : "He has brought about a change in our own lives by which we have started believing in higher values of life...In fact I have tried to be a 'Man' and that is not a small blessing."

Dr. S. BHAGVANTHAM was an Indian physicist of international repute. He was Vice Chancellor of Osmania University and Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence. He used to translate Baba's discourses into English. Bhagwantham has recounted in various articles how an eminent scientist like him came in contact with Baba and how this contact transformed his life. He has said his training as a scientist did not allow him to accept anything on

its face value. He was convinced only after deep and detailed observation and investigation.

Having witnessed thousands of miracles performed by Baba Bhagwantham thought that they are not the most important aspect of the Sai Avatar. He had reached a state where miracles had become secondary to him. For we are amazed and bewildered by these only till such time as we consider Baba to be a saint or self realized human. The moment we realize that he is an Avatar, all his miracles become most natural to his personality.

Once Bhagwantham was sitting on the banks of Chitravathi along with other devotees. Baba started saying that scientists of today do not have faith in God and the scriptures. Then he asked Bhagwantham if he believed in God. Bhagwantham said that he had not lost touch with Indian culture and traditions as he came from a deeply religious family. He also pointed out that even some eminent foreign scientists highly respected The Geeta. On this Baba cupped his hands and filled in the sand of the river. 'Take it', he said to Bhagwantham and as the sand dropped from his hands into Bhagwantham's it changed shape to become a copy of the holy Geeta. This was the first miracle that showed to the scientist how matter can change form at divine command.

Bhagwantham saw another miracle performed at the same place. Baba called a man who seemed to be very poor. Addressing him Baba said to him that he was very poor and had been sitting under a tree in the Ashram for the last four days in the fond hope that Baba would help him. He was a disciple of Baba Harnath and Kusum Kumari and wished to raise money to build a temple in their honour. Baba told him that he was misguided as God does not reside in temples of brick and stone. Where was the need to confine an omnipresent God, said Baba. Asking the man to give up the idea Baba said he would create an idol of Harnath for him. So saying he took sand from the basin and gave it to the man. As the sand changed hands it became a silver idol of Baba Harnath that was identical with the picture printed on the badge worn by the man. Two such miracles convinced Bhagwantham of Baba's divinity.

Once Bhagwantham was in group that accompanied Baba to Kanyakumari. Sitting on the sea-shore Baba asked for other synonyms of the word ocean. One of those present gave the word Ratnakar, meaning treasure of jewels. On this Baba said that surely the

sea must have jewels. Urged by the devotees Baba touched the seawater and at his mere touch it produced a string of jewels that he later gave away to devotee.

To cap it all was the operation performed by Baba on Bhagwantham's son. The son was suffering from a very serious ailment and Baba took him into a room, anaesthetized him with Vibhuti, materialized sophisticated instruments and himself performed the operation successfully. All these miracles removed the cobwebs from Bhagwantham's mind and brought home to him the truth that an Avatar is not subject to human laws and limitations.

O.P. MEHRA was at one time Air Chief Marshal of India and later Governor of Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Recounting his 'Experiences With Baba' (Golden Age—79) he has said that he first came to know of Baba when he was Chairman of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. He was staying with Dharma Vira the then Governor of Karnataka. One morning Dharma Vira asked Mehra if he would like to accompany him to Whitefield to meet Sathya Sai Baba. His wife gladly accepted the invitation. Mehra was not keen about the projected visit. He told his wife that he was in Bangalore for a specific job and not "to spend my time meeting Babas, and that too, to the detriment of my work." His wife did not like his talking slightly of Baba and after a slight bitterness between husband and wife Mehra, reluctantly, went with his wife and Dharma Vira to Whitefield. Baba received them. When Dharma Vira introduced Mehra and his wife. Baba addressed Mehra with the remark: "If you did not want to come here, because you wanted to attend to your work, your duty, you need not have come but at the same time you should not quarrel with your wife in such matters." This was Baba's way of conveying his Omnipresence.

Mehra made a request for another audience which was granted. The next morning Mehra and his wife had another interview with Baba. He was amazed at the manner in which Baba analyzed him, his problems and concerns. This meeting was a turning point in Mehra's life and Baba concluded it with the advice that "Every man has a mission to fulfil... You must do your very best for the organization with which you are associated... To work is to worship; the rewards will be yours."

In September 1971 Mehra's daughter Parveen and her husband came to Bangalore. The husband, Navin, was having problems with stones in the urinary tract. Baba had not, when asked, agreed

to an operation. However, as the problem aggravated, an operation was performed. Later, some complications developed and another operation was suggested. Mehra, his wife and daughter rushed to Whitefield. Baba saw them standing, walked up to them and remarked : "So the son-in-law is worrying you again. What do the doctors say ?" Mehra told him all. His spontaneous remark was : "There will be no operation." He said "Swami will give Prasad. Give it to him. Santosham !" Baba materialized Vibhuti for Navin and Mehra gave it to his son-in-law. Next morning he was taken into the operation theatre. Twenty minutes later doctors brought news that there was now no need for an operation. Mehra concludes : "What better example could I have experienced of his love, affection, compassion and healing hand ? I subscribe to Dr. Gokak's expression, "He brings about a transformation in a man's character and personality." I am one of those who find solace and consolation in His presence and is there more that I can ask for ?"

K.M. MUNSHI was for decades a central character in Indian politics. An associate of Mahatma Gandhi, he was in the forefront of the freedom movement. After independence he joined the Union Council of Ministers and later served as the Governor of U. P. Munshi founded the Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan which has been engaged not only in studies related to languages but has been concerned with the cultural renaissance of India. The Vidya Bhawan has also published important books on our cultural heritage and continues to publish journals in this direction. In 1968 the first World Conference of Sathya Sai Seva Organizations was held in the premises of Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan at Bombay. Munshi had the occasion to come in contact with Baba during this conference. He was deeply impressed continued to write about his experiences with Baba, till the very end of his life, in the various journals published by Vidya Bhawan.

Throughout his life Munshi was in search of people who were eminent in the spiritual field. Divinity in man attracted him and so he considered it to be divine grace that Baba not only allowed him to host the World Conference but also blessed him with personal interviews. With that his life-long search was fulfilled.

At the time when Munshi met Baba he was suffering from Parkinson's disease after a stroke on his right side. Consequently his right arm and leg used to shake continuously. Munshi had gone to the best doctors of the country who had declared his disease

as incurable. When Baba saw Munshi's predicament he got up and went up to him, held his right hand in both his hands, materialized Vibhuti and rubbed it on his arm and created a ring and put it on Munshi's finger. Munshi was cured in those few moments of Baba's healing touch.

Munshi requested Baba to bless his family and Baba visited his home and showered his love on all members of the household. Baba reminded Munshi's son that once he was trapped in great danger during a journey and had to hide in the house of a Station Master to save himself. It was Baba who had saved him on the occasion. Baba talked to Munshi on spiritual matters and provided him guidance. Munshi summed up this first experience with the comment that he went, he saw and he was conquered. He was quick to realize that Baba is an incarnation of God.

Munshi met Baba for the last time on December 30th, 1970. He was 84 then. Baba had then hinted to S. Ramakrishna, editor of Bhawan's Journal, that Munshi would live for another four to five weeks. On the 8th of Feb. 1971, five weeks later, he breathed his last. In his last meeting with Baba Munshi had expressed anxiety about Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan and its mission. Baba had then told him : "Your dream had been realized. Your work has been selfless and you have done it in a spirit of service. It is God's work that you have done. Rest assured ; Bhawan shall continue to flourish and contribute to the advancement of Indian Culture." Munshi is no more, but Vidya Bhawan continues to uphold the highest ideals of Indian Culture.

Many devout Christians have been drawn to Baba through his miracles. They have approached him, observed him, studied and explored his ways and have finally declared that SAI is none but ISA (Christ come again). Christ had promised to come again and this is the Second Coming, proclaim men like Ron Laing.

RON LAING, who lives in England is a researcher in religion and spirituality. His findings have been published in various journals from time to time. He studied various books by and about Baba and then visited Vrindavan (Bangalore) along with his wife. There he was blessed with an interview with Baba on the 19th of January 1980. Subsequently he got three more interviews. In these he questioned Baba about Christ and about Baba himself. On the basis of his experiences and studies he believes that Divinity has incarnated in the form of Baba to redeem mankind and to usher in

a new Golden Age. He has drawn this conclusion in his article : 'The Second Coming Has Come' in which he compares the various aspects of the personality, mission and teachings of Jesus Christ and Sathya Sai.

Ron Laing refers to the statement of Jesus, expunged from later editions of the Bible, in which Jesus said : "He who has sent me will come again. His name will be Truth. He will wear a red robe. He will be short, with a crown of hair." Ron Laing goes on to assert "Sathya means Truth. Baba wears a red robe, is short and has a crown of hair."

There are many areas and aspects of Jesus Christ's life about which little was known till Baba enlightened us. He has given a detailed account of the life and journeyings of Christ from the age of 12 to 30 to fill the gap in the Gospels. On the third day after Crucifixion he came back to life and visited India. He visited many parts of India and stayed in Kashmir till his death. By providing this information Baba has helped in the writing of a biography of Christ. Baba also gave to Hislop an exact replica of the likeness of Jesus as he was on the cross.

Ron Laing says that during his interview on 19.1.80 he "picked up every vestige of courage that was in me" and asked whether "It was you who sent Jesus of Nazareth into incarnation?" Baba replied in the affirmative and Laing further asked if Baba was "what Western Christians call the Cosmic Christ?" "Yes", repeated Baba. Ron Laing was then convinced of the Second Coming.

WALTER COWAN's case history is perhaps the most startling and mind boggling of Baba's miracles. Whileas there are uncountable instances of Baba having cured incurable diseases, in this case Baba resurrected a man—Walter Cowan—hours after he had been dead and confined to a hospital morgue. An authentic account of this incident has been written down both by John Hislop and Cowan's wife Elsie (cf. 'Sai Baba And His Message' by Ruhela and Robinson.)

Walter and Elsie arrived in Madras on 23rd December 1971 where Baba was holding a Conference of the Presidents of Sathya Sai Seva Samitis. Walter was not well and had to be ushered into a chair. But Baba gave the couple a warm welcome. On the morning of 25th of December Walter suffered a fatal attack of what was considered heart trouble and fell down in his hotel room. Elsie prayed to Baba and at the same time fetched Mrs Ratan Lal

who was staying next door in the hotel. Someone called an ambulance to take Walter to the hospital. But Elsie knew he was already dead.

Shortly after the ambulance delivered him to the hospital a well-known doctor attended and found Walter dead. "There were no signs of life; he pronounced Walter dead; his ears and nose were stuffed with cotton; his body was covered with a sheet and moved into an empty room."

At 7 A.M. Elsie and Mrs Ratan Lal went to Baba's place of residence to tell him about Cowan's death and to ask for his advice and help. Baba said he would visit the hospital at about 10 A.M. At 10 A.M. Mrs Ratan Lal and Elsie reached the hospital and were told that Baba had already been there and left. They found Walter alive and having tea.

To clarify the point whether Walter had really died, at Hislop's request, Judge Damodar Rao of Madras interviewed the doctor who has attended on Walter when he had arrived at the Hospital. He confirmed all the facts related to Walter's death. To the doctor and to all others present the resurrection of Cowan was a mystery. Within the next few days, Walter's condition worsened twice about which Baba said later: "Mr Cowan died three times. I had to bring him back three times."

Asked about how he felt during those hours while he was lying dead in the Madras Hospital. Walter narrated a very intense experience. He said that he left his body, as in death. Baba was beside him. Together they went to a place, and there appeared to be a Court of Law there. The Chairman called for the Register relating to Walter Cowan and the records were read. At the end of the recital Baba addressed the panel and the Chairman, saying that he had a role for Walter, and that Walter should be released from death into the care of Baba.

Hislop asked Baba if Walter's experience was actual. Baba replied: "The experience was real experience, not an illusion. It was an experience occurring within Mr Cowan's mind and I was, myself, there—directing and clarifying the thoughts." Walter Cowan was thus resurrected from the dead and lived for a few more years. After his death his wife Elsie built the Walter Cowan Memorial Hostel for the students of Sri Sathya Sai College, Whitefield, Vrindavan (Bangalore).

In this chapter the author has incorporated experiences of eminent persons whose credibility is beyond question. Many of them suffered initial prejudices against Baba but convincing experiences helped them overcome these prejudices. These experiences are definitely extraordinary and miraculous, certainly puzzling for those who tend to rationalize or explain events through logic and refuse to accept as genuine events beyond the reach of their limited approach. One must never forget that very often truth is stranger than fiction. What is required is an open mind ready to delve into the human experience and divine possibilities without being chained to prejudice or egotism. Hearsay is no evidence and seeing is believing.

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Enslave yourself to God and not to man. Hold fast to your Sadhana. Repeat the Gayatri—it is a universal prayer. It has three parts, Dhyana—meditation on the glory of God as Illumination immanent in the three worlds, upper, middle and lower (Om Bhuh Bhuvah, swah; thath Savitur varenyam); it has Smarana or picturisation of the grace (bhargo devasya dheemahi) and prarthana—prayer for compassion for the sake of liberation, through the awakening of Intelligence that pervades the entire universe, not to any particular Name or Form of that Intelligence; and so all can use it and be saved by it. There can be no fanaticism, no hatred, no rivalry if Gayatri is adhered to; its Japa will clarify the passion and promote Love. —Baba : His Discourse on 13-10-67.

Baba's Aura : A Scientist's Viewpoint

"Perhaps, of all the miracles I witnessed in India, no miracles is as great as the miracle of one man giving so much love to so many people. Perhaps you have to meet this man to understand his gifts."

—Dr. Frank J Baranowski.

Pictures of Indian saints, gods and incarnations have always depicted a halo or aura around their visages. However, many considered it to be a projection of the artists imagination symbolizing the esteem in which people held these gods etc. However, conclusive scientific proof is now available to show that such an aura or energy-field emanates not only from holy men and Avatars but also from ordinary men and women. This is what Dr. Baranowski has to say : "Now, I have always been able to see the human aura, that is, the energy-pattern which surrounds a person."

Dr. Baranowski goes on to say : "Now, I am a devout Catholic and a scientist at that. In my country (America) it is just not possible to accept a man as an Avatar or Godhead. Yet, I would be a fool if I did not recognize the powers this man possesses ! And if I proclaim to have seen and met a divine incarnation as a scientist my colleagues might go to the extent of calling me loony. But the truth must be told and I care not for the consequences. My experience and my studies of the aura of Sathya Sai have revealed Baba to be what he himself proclaims to be his form : pure and selfless love personified. Such selfless love cannot exude from anyone but the Divine."

Studies in the field of the human aura have been conducted by various scientists over the centuries. Nearly a century ago a European scholar named Leadbeater wrote a book cognizing the existence of human auras. But no one took the book seriously at the time. Scientists who pursued this area of research subsequently

met with nothing but ridicule. Wilhelm Reich of America was even imprisoned for such blasphemous ideas. Research, however, continued. It was in 1939 that a Russian scientist invented a camera—the Krilian Camera—capable of photographing the human aura. Kendel Johnson of the University of California improved upon this camera and brought out an improved model in 1963.

Dr. Baranowski believes that some people are endowed with the faculty to perceive the human aura naturally, unaided by any equipment. He himself is one such person. He has discovered that 'auras are composed of every imaginable colour and these colours change as a person's emotional, physical and mental states change.' The colour blue in a person's aura is an indication of deep spirituality, green is a healing colour; yellow indicates high intelligence; and red denotes anger or frustration. The learned scientist explains that the colour pink, which is rarely seen, typifies a person capable of selfless love. This is the colour of the aura that Sathya Sai has around him.

Baranowski says that auras differ in colours and range according to a person's temperament, character, emotional chemistry etc. 'In a peaceful state of mind a person is surrounded by a blue aura and the colour changes to deep red in a state of agitation. The vibrational frequency also increases in an excited state from 5 or 6 when calm to 50-60 when agitated.'

Sathya Sai Baba's aura has been found to be unique as per the studies conducted by Dr. Baranowski. He studied Baba's aura during two different periods—first during his visit in 1978 and then later in 1984. On both occasions he was astounded by the range and field of force of Baba's aura. This is what he has to say: "The auras around average people extend as much as three to five feet, and are generally blue or red." The aura around Sai Baba was pink signifying pure selfless love. "It went beyond the building against which he stood; this energy—field reached thirty or forty in all directions." Baranowski further goes on to confess 'never having seen any aura like this before.' He also had the opportunity to witness Baba's aura in colours that he had never seen earlier nor has he seen such heavenly colours in any aura ever since. These were brilliant white, silver and gold. He had read of the existence of golden auras but was only around Baba that he had the occasion to witness such an arua.

It is a unique experience to study Baba's energy pattern. When a scientist begins to study his aura he seems to indulge in some kind of sport to bewilder the scientist. On such occasions he has been found to be surrounded by continuously changing colours. Dr. Baranowski thinks that sometimes Sathya Sai indulges in divine play with him : "As soon as I begin to look at him he emits vibrations of innumerable colour-schemes. They range through various shades of white, yellow, orange, blue, grey, silver and gold, which makes one exclaim : Stupendous ! Incredible ! Oh God !"

Some other characteristics of Baba's aura place him in the category of the Divine. The range of Baba's aura has been found to be almost unlimited, penetrating tall buildings, rising high, and disseminating into the skies. His aura expands and envelops his devotees when he showers them with love touching even the remotest person in the congregation, say upto 300 feet. It is not merely an allegorical shower of love, it is very much a scientific reality.

Also, when Baba showers compassion on someone in great distress, suffering or grief, or when he exudes bliss during Bhajan sessions, his aura becomes all encompassing transmitting divine vibrations of great intensity to the congregation. The transformation that the devotees feel after Baba's 'Darshan' or after having been in his company is a direct outcome of this cosmic influence of his aura. He often says : 'You come to me frustrated and disappointed. I charge your batteries before sending you back.' The 'charging' is done through his aura. Even the most vicious and wicked among us feel transformed after simply his 'Darshan'. Remorse purges such people. Agitated and excited minds are becalmed and filled with tranquility and bliss. Such is the impact of his aura.

An engineer from abroad writes : "When I am face to face with Baba my heart overflows with strange sensations and I begin to feel compassion for those whom I might have harmed, harassed or humiliated. Why does this happen ? And this is not all ! I feel overwhelmed and begin to cry, tears endlessly rolling down my cheeks ! Such a thing never happened before. Not that I am sentimental. On the contrary I consider sentimentality as stupid. But it happens that Baba digs out all our latent thoughts, actions and feelings, and fills us with remorse for our past actions telling us to be good, to see good, and to do good."

The form of expression may differ from person to person but the fact remains that in the presence of Sathya Sai every person gets a novel experience which is attributed by the scientists to the impact of his aura. Not only does it purify the feelings and emotions; it brings about spiritual awakening, providing our soul the divine spark for it to reveal all its latent glory and splendour. Contact through his aura is perhaps one of the tools that the Avatar is using for transforming our animality into divinity. Those who get even a glimpse of his divine self are thus blessed through his spiritual contact though physically they may not have achieved proximity to Baba. It is the subtle body that Baba communicates with, which in turn transforms the gross body. All this is achieved through the tremendous force of his energy-field. That is why his Darshan is such a satisfying experience.

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Make four resolutions a'out your life hereafter. Purity : desist from wicked thoughts, bad habits, low activities that weaken yourself respect. Service : serve others, for they are the reflections of the same Entity of which you are yourself another reflection. No one of you has any authenticity, except with reference to The One Original. Mutuality : feel always kinship with all creation. See the same current flowin; through all the objects in the Universe. Truth : do not deceive your self or others by distorting your experience.

—Baba : Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. III p. 213-14.

Paths to Divinity

"An Avatar opens up the path of superconsciousness for mankind. If man still does not tread that path either our beliefs about Christ, Buddha and Krishna are wrong or the whole life and mission of the Avatar are fruitless."

—Maharishi Aurobindo

In answer to the questions of R. K. Karanjia, Editor of 'Blitz', Baba said : "Rama came to feed the roots of Truth and Righteousness, Krishna followed to foster the plants of Peace and love. Now these sacred principles are in danger of wholesale destruction by reason of human weakness under the onslaught of evil forces. They are overcoming the good, the spiritual and the divine in man. That is why the present Avatar has come invested with the totality of Cosmic Power to save Dharma from Anti-Dharma." This task of redeeming mankind is to be performed through the five forces of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence.

The predicament of mankind today is really pitiable. On the one hand increasing materialism has accentuated the evils of uncontrolled desires, jealousy, avarice, hatred, ego and other such tendencies. Peace has gone to pieces and passions have replaced patience. On the other hand man today is faced with natural calamities like earthquakes and floods of severe intensity as well as onslaughts of incurable diseases like Cancer and Aids. His only hope lies in his efforts to enhance his Divine force through spiritual efforts and practices. The divinity within is to be awakened so that man's power and control over the forces that control his destiny increase. To awaken this divinity in each one of us is the mission and task Baba has set for himself.

The Avatar, however, can provide only guidance and inspiration. He is there to help us achieve our divine objective. This objective has been defined and described in various terms such as Super-

Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, Mergence of the Soul and the Cosmic soul etc. By whatever name it may be called, it is the ultimate goal of human upliftment.

Different religions point out different paths towards the achievement of this sublime goal. However, each one has to choose the path most suitable in the place, time and circumstances in which one is placed. The circumstances today are most adverse for spiritual advancement. And no ready-made prescriptions can be effective except the path shown by Baba. We may call it the Sai Path to spiritual progress. We must, however, remember that Baba does not propagate any new religion or sect. His teachings are the sum and substance of the good points of all religions. The Sai philosophy is rooted in ancient culture and is a pragmatic approach suited to the circumstances of today. To those who are already versed in or following some spiritual path already, Baba says not to give up their chosen path but to pursue it more vigorously.

Individuals differ according to their predominant tendencies, the tendencies being Jnana, Bhakti and Karma, i.e. knowledge, devotion and action. Although these three are present in all human beings, their weightage differs. And, accordingly, some people try to realize God through the path of knowledge; others believe it is impossible to KNOW God and hence follow the path of worship; whileas yet others follow the philosophy of Karma, of doing good as taught through the Bhagwatgita. These three paths may appear to be separate and different but that is only appearance and not reality. For ultimately, as God-consciousness or superconsciousness dawns all differences are revealed to be only skin-deep. However, for the beginner, the each of three paths of Bhakti, Karma, and Jnana has different connotations. Hence we shall discuss each one separately before coming to the Sai Path—the easy road to liberation. Each individual chooses the path that holds the greatest attraction for him which again depends on our innate tendencies and inclinations.

Let us discuss the Jnana Marg first. The objective of the seeker of knowledge of God is Truth. For Truth is God. Truth does not die. It cannot be pierced by arms, nor burnt by fire. It is unaffected by time and space. Truth is indestructible. Truth is equated with God in Indian Philosophy for God permeates all things at all times and places. All gross and subtle, animate and inanimate, earthly and divine objects are only the different facets

of Brahman that emerge from and ultimately merge in Brahman. Thus the whole cosmos is, manifestation of and ruled by, Brahman. The Brahman is therefore Truth or the Ultimate Reality or the Cosmic Reality. We are afflicted by duality in so much as we are unable to see the Unity or Truth underlying all animate and inanimate objects of the Universe. Our efforts to gain knowledge and realization of the basic unity are faced with difficulties caused by appearances. Once this basic Truth is realized the Ultimate Truth or Brahman is realized.

The soul i.e. the life-force in each individual is also part of the Cosmic soul. The seeker of God through knowledge realizes this ultimate truth in the course of his search for the Cosmic soul, finally attaining the state where there remains no difference between the soul, Cosmic soul, Brahman and Truth. Elucidating the point Baba says that when one begins to realize the divinity in himself and in other beings as one and the same, he sees all things as God and God in all things. That is the attainment of knowledge or Truth. Jnana does not lie in mere study of books but in experiencing the Ultimate Reality.

What, then, are the means for attaining this state of Jnana ? Indian thinkers believe that the faculty of discrimination and a pure and loving heart are the basic requisites. Baba also says that this state cannot be achieved through the gross body. The subtle body has to be activated and the light of discrimination and force of love are basic requirements. Indian seers have said that pure intellect and pure mind are the two ways to acquire True Knowledge and Baba has stressed that absolute knowledge will never be revealed to us by our gross senses. Keen intellect and unsullied mind are the basic requirements for it. Intellect operates through it two agencies, namely curiosity and logical discrimination. Curiosity leads to acceptance of favourable facts and logical thinking leads to abandonment of unfavourable facts. On the one hand, the Sadhaka led by curiosity acquires the knowledge of the multifarious activities of the mundane life, the ingredients of Dharma and the spiritual code; and on the other hand, through the discriminating intellect he comes to know that worldly things are unstable, transient and perishable and so he renounces them. [He lays emphasis on eagerness and Thyaga (renunciation). Thyaga is attained through logical deduction of the futility and evanescence of material objects and physical relationships.] Eagerness helps a Sadhaka in exploring spiritual regi-

mens and disciplines. Logic and Thyaga help in attaining the state of detachment which is in other words Moksha or desirelessness.

It is also professed that a Sadhaka passes through three stages of curiosity or eagerness viz curiosity about Karma (actions), Dharma, and God. Curiosity about Karma leads him to ponder over good and bad, right and wrong actions. On the basis of his insight into the world of beings he finally learns to discriminate that only those actions are good that lead him to, and not away from, his goal of God realization. In the second stage he ponders over Dharma or righteousness and draws his conclusions of the True and Imperishable tenets of righteousness. Finally he contemplates on the form and manifestation of Brahman, the unity between Jeevi (soul) and Brahman (Cosmic soul), and the Oneness of the two. Appearances and duality disappear and the final Truth is realized.

Indian philosophers have recommended a four-fold path to Jnana. Baba also recommends a similar approach. This fourfold path incorporates Discrimination, Detachment, Discipline and Desirelessness.

Discrimination refers to the ability to distinguish between the permanent and the impermanent so that one can hold on only to the permanent. Experience tells that material objects are impermanent and only the soul and Cosmic soul are permanent. Once the Sadhaka develops discrimination he will not be attracted to worldly objects but will vigorously pursue the path towards union of the soul with the Cosmic soul.

Detachment relates to Thyaga or renunciation of pleasures of this world as well as the other world. Most of our Karma or actions are linked with desire—desire to enjoy the fruits of Karma. Attachment to result leads to disappointments and sorrow. As Baba says, pleasure is only an interval between two periods of pain. All things are subject to decay and death. Hence attachment results in sorrow in the end. Even the joys of heaven are impermanent as the cycle of birth and death brings back the soul to this earth and all unpleasant experiences that go with the body. Attachment is thus the cause of all suffering. Baba says that bliss is achieved only when one gets rid of the cycle of rebirth. This is possible only by cultivating detachment.

Discipline, according to Indian thinkers, involves a sixfold regimen. It includes Sama, Dama, Titiksha, Uparati, Sradha and Samadhan. This Six-Fold philosophy preaches a strict code of

conduct for the body and the mind for those who tread the path of Jnana. Sama means equanimity or the state of being unaffected by pleasure and pain. This is possible only after one has overcome ego. For it is ego that gives birth to the other feelings of hatred, fear, lust, anger, ridicule, amazement and zeal etc. which hinder equanimity. Only when these feelings are conquered can equanimity be achieved. Baba also says that as long as ego exists God cannot be achieved. However, he does not recommend a strict code of austerity and abnegation. It must be made clear that although Baba too lays stress on equanimity achieved through egolessness he does not at all recommend this sixfold discipline.

'Dama' means subduing the gross body. Uprati asks for abnegation from pleasure. Titiksha refers to the ability to endure contrary circumstances such as hot and cold, pleasure and pain etc. Sraddha demands full faith in the scriptures, the Guru or preceptor, in your objective and in your ability to achieve that objective. Samadhi means full concentration on God and the ability to meditate. Thus one can see how difficult the Jnana Marg or Path of Knowledge is as it is based on absolute control over the mind, the body and the heart.

Desirelessness is Moksha. When man realizes the Truth about the world and worldly objects desires get left behind and only one desire—that of experience of Brahman or the Lord—is left. This state of sublimation is Moksha.

The seeker of Truth treading the path of Jnana does not search for the Lord in the external world. It is a search into the within. To him the body is only the raiment covering the Atman. The five sheaths that hide the Brahman within are described as the Anna Maya Kosh, Prana Maya Kosh, Manomaya Kosh, Vijnana Maya Kosh and Anand Maya Kosh. The Anna Maya Kosh or the sheath of foods can be purified by feeding our senses only with pure food. All that we intake through the five Indriyas or senses constitutes food. Pranamaya Kosh or the life-force can be purified through breathing exercises such as Pranayam or inhaling and exhaling with the mind meditating on God. Mano Maya Kosh or the sheath of the mind can be purified by good thoughts and contemplation of God. The Vijnanamaya Kosh or sheath knowledge can be purified through contemplation on the Lord for it is only the Lord who is Bliss.

The above mentioned five sheaths are further grouped under three heads namely the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The gross body intakes the Anna Maya and Prana Maya sheaths. The subtle body consists of the Mano Maya and Vijnana Maya sheaths (feelings, thoughts etc). The causal body encloses the Anand Maya sheath or bliss-eternal. The subtle body is overlaid by the gross body and the causal body lies hidden within the subtle body. After death the gross body is destroyed and the subtle body undergoes the fruits of Karma. The soul is the indweller of the causal body. Hence divinity is to be found within. For Atman is inseparable from Parmatman. That is why the state of bliss consequent upon God-realization is known as self-realization. This is the final point of achievement in the Jnana Marg or the Path of knowledge of God. It is, so to say, moving from being in the light to the light being in you and finally you and the light becoming one and your identity being lost in the light.

A person who attains this final state is called a Jnani. Baba says that today all and sundry consider themselves to be Jnanis. The characteristics of a Jnani, as described by Baba, are given here. He should see God in all beings. He should not run after material attractions. He should have attained a state of desireless detachment. Conscious of the impermanence of the world, such a person is immersed in thoughts of God alone. He is unaffected by the dualities, such as pleasure and pain, praise and criticism. Such a man is unafraid of death for he knows that it is only the body that suffers death whereas the soul does not perish.

When the Jnani realizes Truth he achieves the state of heavenly Bliss. This bliss emanates from within and is unrelated to the external world. In knowing Brahman the Jnani himself becomes Brahman. Duality is replaced by Unity. The Jnani i.e. the seeker and the sought become one and inseparable. That is the culmination of the Jnana Marg.

BHAKTI MARG or the path of worship is the emotional facet of Sadhana. Emotional attachment to God or love of God may be termed the basis of worship. Acharya Ramachandra Shukla the famous Hindi critic, defines worship as the union of Sraddha and Prema or reverence and love. When we are impressed by the qualities of someone we begin to revere him. Also, when the spiritual force of someone draws us to him we might begin to revere him. This reverence changes into love when reciprocated. Whileas

the mental faculties are at the root of reverence, love is based on feelings. In the Gita surrender of the mind and the heart has been described as the base of worship. Baba says that the remembering or meditation over the characteristics of God inspire the devotee into worshipping Him. The role of the mind as well as the heart is important. The mind draws because it analyses and discriminates the Godhead from men. The heart is filled with love that leads to surrender.

Worship is also of two kinds : worship of the formless or Nirguna and Saguna i.e. worship of one of the various forms of God. Worship of form is more commonly found as it is easier. Descriptions of the Gunas, Leelas and Mahimas (Qualities, Miracles and Acts of Grace) lead to enhancement of love for God. The various Avatars are the forms on which people repose worship. The qualities, miracles and acts of grace related to a particular form enhance faith in and love for, that form. Bhajans or devotional songs attract us because they glorify these three aspects of God. We love Baba too for these very reasons and for the sixteen traits of Godhood that he possesses.

How Bhakti grows is illustrated by Baba allegorically. First, he says, plant the seed of awareness in the soil of your heart. As the seed germinates, water it with love. Add the fertilizers of faith and fortitude. Secure it against pests with the help of Namasmarana and Satsang (Devotional singing and good company). When you do all this the plant of Bhakti or worship shall grow up to be strong and shall bear flowers and fruits.

Awareness is the basis of faith in form. Awareness of the formless is rather difficult as compared with the form. For with the form are associated its attributes that attract. For example, awareness of Rama brings to mind the attributes of Rama. The same is true about other Avatars including Baba. As long as we are unaware of Baba's divinity we consider him to be a mere human being like us. And as long as we are unaware of his divinity we cannot develop a sense of worship for him. Moreover, as long as we consider him to be human we shall not be able to understand his miraculous powers and acts of grace, being befuddled with doubts and suspicions. Thus, awareness is a prerequisite for worship.

Love dwells in the heart. But worldly love is different from love for God. Worldly love is selfish and has its basis in the senses.

Man's love for woman is sensual. But love for God is pure and untainted by the senses. Worldly love is egocentric whileas worship is based on negation of ego. Faith and fortitude are needed for worship to become strong. Worship also undergoes continuous tests. Often, in adverse circumstances or under strain of criticism from various quarters, our worship is in danger of dwindling. Baba says the pilgrim along the Godly path is bedevilled by many hindrances that endanger his spiritual quest. In such situations firm faith in the omnipresence and omnipotence of God is his only source of strength.

Sometimes people question the efficacy of worship asking whether it has the capacity to fulfil worldly needs of bread and raiment. Baba says that such critics are unaware that a single call from a devotee in distress is enough to draw His grace. Sometimes devotees have to face adverse circumstances. They should face such situations with patience and courage. In fact worship of God enables a person to face adversities bravely and not crumble under them.

Namasmarana or Bhajan is the most potent medium of worship. Baba often dwells upon the efficacy of the name and advocates constant Japa of the chosen name of God. Namasmarana constantly reminds us of the miraculous and gracious powers of God. It also helps us in tiding over our evil tendencies of lust, anger, jealousy, attachment etc. and establishes a direct link with God. Namasmarana gives divine energy to the devotee leading from darkness unto light.

Satsang, i.e. keeping company of the good and dedicated enhances devotion. It helps to purify the heart and the mind and is a source of inspiration and bliss. It leads to detachment. On the other hand bad company heightens evil propensities. Agnostics and others whose ultimate objective is the gross body are the greatest impediments to worship and one must scrupulously avoid them. The final stage of worship or devotion is reached when the devotee is all the time conscious of the form and name of God that he adores. He is in a state of constant bliss and in constant communion with God and all the barriers of the gross, subtle and causal body fall and disappear. The state of superconsciousness that the Jnani achieves through efforts to 'know' God is reached and achieved by the devotee through worship or devotion. Both attain the status of being fully detached, desireless and egoless.

Various forms of 'worship have been enumerated in the scriptures. The ninefold path describes worshipping of God as a friend, master, etc. Baba says that all these are merely academic and do not matter. What matters most is surrender. Total surrender to God compels God to look after even the smallest daily needs of his devotee. The devotee's welfare then becomes the responsibility of God. In the Gita Krishna has promised total protection and well-being to the devotee who surrenders to God totally.

KARMA MARG or the path of action dwells upon the importance of our actions. We reap what we sow. The basis of Karm Yoga is the fact that every action bears fruit. Good actions therefore bear good results and evil ones lead to bad results.

Man cannot escape action or Karma as life demands activity. Each one of us has to discharge his daily duties. So none of us can avoid Karma. Even the Jnani and the Bhakta have to perform actions. As such they are also subject to the theory of cause and effect to a certain extent.

Human actions can be classified into two groups viz. worldly actions and spiritual actions. Worldly actions are those that are performed during the routine of living. Spiritual actions are those that are prescribed by the scriptures. Moreover they are also classified as Tamasik, Rajasik and Sathvik or gross, semi-gross, and refined. Indulgence in and gratification of base and carnal desires unapproved by law and Dharma are Tamasik activities. Daily duties such as official work and labour done to earn bread constitutes Rajasik activities. Worship, charity, acts of purity, goodness and compassion are Sathvik.

Worldly action concern four areas of work. They may be productive, e.g. agriculture etc. Actions concerning barter, trade and commerce constitute the second kind of worldly activity. Actions that involve change of form or shape are the third kind. They are exemplified by the carpenter, sculptor, mason etc. Scavenging, cleaning etc. are the fourth kind of actions. All these kinds of actions are performed in fulfilment of the daily needs of man and are manifestations of his skill and energy. They may lead to satisfaction or even pleasure but are unable to provide bliss.

Actions prescribed by the scriptures satisfy the spiritual urge of man. Most of these actions are performed in repayment of the debt that man owes to God, to his Guru and to his parents; what is

called the Daiva Rina, the Acharya Rina and Pitra Rina. Worship, Yajna, charity, fasting, visiting holy places are Sathvik actions and they purify the body, the mind and the soul, thus securing for us a better hereafter. As man undergoes the cycle of birth and death propelled by desires even these actions cannot grant him Moksha which is attainable only through desirelessness.

Actions performed in the discharge of daily duties do not affect destiny. Also wrong deeds resulting from ignorance are not as grave as wilful immorality or harm caused to others out of spite. Such actions have an equally opposite reaction. Penitence brings grace. Baba says that grace of God can reduce the intensity of the after effects of Karma. Grace can even fully absolve one of sin. But to earn such grace firm faith, total surrender and constant prayer are needed.

How can one attain Moksha ? In other words, how can one be freed from the cycle of birth and death ? Answering this question Baba asks : What is Moksha ? And himself answers that Moksha is Moha Kshaya which means a state of desirelessness. He says that actions performed without attachment to their result are divine actions. It is the desire for results that pollutes Karma. Karma should be performed as offerings to God. Such actions, being unattached, do not bind us with their consequences.

The Gita also advocates Karma without attachment. Whileas such Karma might have been possible for a Sadhaka like Arjuna, for the modern man, in present circumstances, it is a difficult proposition. Keeping this in mind Baba says that if you cannot detach yourself fully from Karma, the best thing would be to keep in mind whether a particular action will be the source of bliss to you and to others affected by such action. Such a consciousness will save you from evil actions and their evil consequences.

Baba says that selfishness gets and forgets and selflessness gives and forgives. Hence, selfless actions are Sathvik or righteous and earn God's grace. Such grace brings worldly joy and spiritual bliss. So, the motivation for action should be to please God. For if God is pleased material benefits and spiritual awakening and bliss shall surely follow.

Often we avoid right action on the plea that Truth cannot be pursued in the present times. Corruption has assumed alarming proportions and honesty is undervalued. An honest dutiful and conscientious man is often harassed. One is sometimes even faced

with the dilemma of being pressurised into corruption by his superiors.

For the guidance of such people Baba says that one should strive to please God and not his corrupt superiors. However, he should not boast of, or be proud of his honesty and uprightness. He should constantly pray to God to guide him out of difficult situations and should offer all actions at His Lotus Feet.

Baba has pointed out that out of these three paths of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma each one of us chooses according to his inclinations and innate tendencies. All three are complimentary to and not exclusive of each other. Love is the most important. Baba says that Love is God and exhorts us to live in love. For it is love that sublimates Jnana, Bhakti and Karma. Compassion too is important. For it is the basis of love. Baba's teachings are nectar for the Jnani, for they dispel darkness and lead the Jnani from darkness unto light. His Bhajans are nectar to the Bhakta for they establish communion with Sai Avatar who says: 'Wherever my glory is sung, I manifest myself.' And to the Karma Yogi his doctrine of service to man being service to God brings Karmik bliss and grace for he tells us: 'See good, be good and do good; for that is the way to God'. Thus, Baba is loved and adored by the Jnani, the Bhakta, the Karma Yogi, et al.



It is only in Sanatan Dharma that the importance of karma in shaping the destiny of man, the fact of the individual undergoing many births in his progress towards birthlessness, and the mighty Grace of God's coming as man among men to gather them around him in holy companionship for saving them and saving the world through them is so strongly and so clearly laid down. If you doubt any of these great truths, you are certain to suffer and grieve. Every one of you must be saved, sooner or later, by the grace of the All-me.ciful. Make it sooner rather than later. Keep the goal clear before the eye and march on.

—Baba : Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. V, p. 263.

Meditation

Meditation is considered to be the most effective path to Divinity. Its significance can never be overemphasized. Indian scriptures have all advocated meditation for self-realization. In the sixth chapter of the Geeta is enshrined Dhyana Yoga as propounded by Lord Krishna. The Geeta says that meditation is most effective towards the control of senses and the monkey mind. Though the term used in the Geeta is Yoga, it evidently refers to meditation as explained in the verses from 10 to 14 of chapter six. The verses prescribe that the Yogi should sit quietly in a secluded place, control his senses, and undertake yoga after detaching himself from desires. He should sit on some Aasana prepared by placing woolen cloth, deer's skin and Kusha grass one over the other. He should sit without moving. After controlling his senses and mind he should try to purify his inner self through contemplation of God. His posture should be such that his spine, back, neck and head remain straight. Through half closed eyes he should concentrate on the tip of his nose. Evidently, it is meditation that is being expounded.

Many Indian religious texts lay emphasis on meditation and have explained the practice of Dhyana in detail. The famous saint Patanjali talks of Ashtang Yoga or the eight fold meditation in his book 'Yoga Sutra'. The culmination of meditation is known as Samadhi which is the highest state of spiritual awakening and enlightenment. Explaining Samadhi Baba says that Sama means equal and Dhi means mind. Thus, Samadhi means equanimity, says he. According to him it is that stage of spiritual advancement where one is unaffected by pleasure and pain, loss and gain, calumny and praise. It is the state of desirelessness too. To reach this stage, says Baba, one has to undertake meditation. We must clarify that we are not discussing Hath Yoga but the Bhakti Yoga. Hath Yoga involves other, much rigorous, practices.

Meditation has been a very ancient spiritual practice in India. Both Buddha and Mahavira attained enlightenment through meditation. Moreover, it is practiced by the Jnani, the Bhakta and the Karma Yogi as a means for communion with God. The Nirguna and the Saguna, *i.e.* those who worship God as formless as well as those who worship him in some form, emphasize the significance of meditation.

Meditation helps not only in controlling and sublimating our senses and evil tendencies but also helps in purifying the mind leading it to the pursuit of God. It requires coordination of the senses, the mind, the heart and our actions. Famous saints and ascetics like Swami Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Yogananda, Raman Maharshi, Aurbindo, and Swami Sivananda have all extolled Meditation as the way to God. Baba, too has, dwelt upon the importance of meditation in many of his discourses. His book 'Dhyana Vahini' deals in detail with all aspects of meditation. Vivekananda has written that the most important practice for a spiritual life is meditation. It lifts us above our gross body and helps us realize our divinity. It does not need external help. It purifies the body and mind and it purifies the atmosphere around us.

Talking about meditation, Baba says that it is different from concentration. Concentration is when we learn to centre our mind on the name or form of our choice or upon a flame of light. Concentration is a prerequisite of meditation and is a stage below meditation. Meditation involves contemplation of God and concentration keeps the mind centred at one place for some period of time, not allowing it to be distracted by the gross body and the habits thereof.

In his book Dhyana Vahini he has dealt with different aspects of Dhyana such as Dhyana with Japa and without the use of rosary. He has dealt with the need for meditation. Man, he says, has to perform different kinds of actions which may be classified as routine actions and good deeds. Routine actions are related to daily duties whileas good deeds are expression of man's divinity. Divine actions can be performed only when we follow the tenets of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence. Today, we are normally, most of the time, engrossed in the sensual manifestations of the gross body. In such a predicament it is rather difficult to advance on the path of spirituality, for which a firm mental grip over the senses is required. Meditation is the most potent means to

control the mind and the senses. It leads to sublimation of thoughts. Baba says : Through meditation on the pure and powerful God we can get rid of sensuality. When we are in meditation the mind checks and controls our thoughts from running in all directions. When the mind—through meditation—becomes conscious of it's true self and form, it cannot be led astray by untruth and sorrow. This leads to contentment and bliss. Thus the mind and the senses get sublimated through meditation, leading us to realization of the blissful form of God.

Baba has dwelt in detail upon the importance of four things in meditation. They are the place, Asana meaning the mat one sits on and the posture, the time and form. The place should be selected so as to ensure a quiet and undisturbed session. It should be neat and clean and preferably away from the hubub and hue and cry of daily life. It could be a secluded place or a suitable room in your own house. But once selected, meditation should be done daily there only. One should not change the place of meditation frequently.

Regarding the mat Baba says that one may sit on a wooden plank covered with a woolen mat or a mat of Kusha grass. If wooden plank is not available or is uncomfortable to sit on one may sit on a woolen or silken mat or mat of Kusha grass. Explaining the significance, Baba says that when we meditate on God our body gets charged with divine energy. This should not be lost through earth-contact. The Sadhaka should sit facing the East or the North. This is prescribed because of the direction of the electrostatic and electromagnetic charge through our body. The posture should be such as does not cause discomfort to the body. For if the body is in discomfort the mind cannot concentrate and without concentration contemplation and meditation are not possible. Though Padmasana is the best posture it can be comfortable only after much practice and may not be possible for those who begin in middle age or later. The next best posture is Sukhasana. Padmasana is sitting in lotus form whileas Sukhasana is sitting easy cross-legged. The spinal column should remain straight. However, one should not stiffen the body but keep it relaxed. If these postures do not suit then one could sit even in Vajrasana. In fact Vajrasana is very good for the physiognomy of women and for those who might be suffering from Hernia. (Recommendation of Vajrasana is not Baba's and is of my friend Prof. R. Mohan Rai, who has translated this book from

Hindi into English.) The arms should be kept straight; the hands resting on the knees. The index finger and thumb should be held together with the other three fingers stretched forward. The eyes should be closed or half closed looking at the form of God that one likes most.

Baba divides the cycle of time into Sathwik Kala, Rajasik Kala and Tamasik Kala. The hours from four a.m. to eight a.m. and four p.m. to eight p.m. is Sathwik Kala and hence most suited for meditation and worship. From eight a.m. to four p.m. is Rajasik Kala suitable for daily duties and household chores. From eight p.m. to four a.m. is Tamasik Kala when evil and undesirable tendencies are in ascendance. The time selected for meditation should be such as does not distract your mind. You should not be in a tearing hurry. For hurry causes worry which is anti-meditation. One should try to undertake meditation at one and the same time daily.

As regards form Baba says that it is easier to meditate on form than without it. Anyway, it helps beginners a great deal. After one has reached an advanced stage form may lose importance. For in the stage of Samadhi one is in constant undisturbed meditation. One may use a photograph or picture of God or Guru to help him in concentrating the mind. Once selected, the form should not be changed. Most of Baba's devotees find his photographs most conducive to meditation and select one that they like most out of the hundreds available. Baba's smiling form with upraised hand has been found to be most popular.

To begin with, deep breathing may be done a few times. Inhaling pure air helps in purifying the body and mind, preparing them for spirituality. Onkar or Om may then be chanted from three to twentyone times depending on the time available and the patience of the Sadhaka. Onkar should rise from deep within the navel ascending through the lungs to the throat and culminating with lips closed.

After Onkar one may undertake Japa or recitation. Japa may be of some mantra such as the Gayatri or some name such as Om Sai Ram or Om Nama Sivaya. It may be done with or without a rosary and any number of times such as three, nine, twentyone or hundred and eight. Many of Baba's devotees practice Japa of the one hundred and eight names of Baba. While undertaking Japa

one must contemplate on the meaning of the name or the glory of the form so that the mind and thoughts remain immersed in God.

If the Sadhaka has no interest in Japa he may sit silently and try to contemplate on the form of God dear to him. The idea is to draw one's thoughts inwards. One may or may not see light or vision of God during the period of meditation. The success of meditation lies in controlling the wayward mind and directing one's thoughts towards God instead of the world. One should try to detach oneself from the capers of the monkey mind.

For good meditation it is essential to keep the body and the mind relaxed. If one does not like to concentrate on the Name or the Form he may try to concentrate on Jyoti or Flame. That is why we always light a lamp when we sit in worship and meditation. Though an electric lamp is not fit to meditate upon it is also not essential to light a lamp of pure Ghee. One may use mustard oil or refined oil as medium for the lamp. In his 'Dhyana Vahini' Baba has dealt in detail on how to undertake Dhyana on the Jyoti.

The essential thing in meditation is detachment—detachment from worldliness, from the five senses, from all kinds of thoughts. The final stage of this detachment is tranquility also known as Samadhi.

Many strange experiences are linked with meditation. Some Sadhakas experience divine visions, others hear divine sounds while yet others may feel transported into a blissful world. Lights of different hues such as blue, turquoise, violet, yellow, golden, white or pink may be seen or intense heat may be experienced. All these are normal meditational experiences and should not cause any concern. Also, the absence of any such experience or some such experience as is not enumerated here are also not unusual.

The period of meditation depends upon the ability to concentrate. The moment it becomes boring or uncomfortable to the body or the mind one should stop meditating. Thereafter, open your eyes slowly, look around at the pictures of Gods or your Guru and try to linger your thoughts on pure and holy things. You may get up slowly or after singing some Bhajan so that your return to the world is gradual and not sudden. Also, your final act may be prayer. You may pray for the welfare of others, for some sick or suffering person or for salvation. Remember, never pray for the ill of or harm to others. For, sooner or later, evil recoils on the doer and you are sure to reap the whirlwind if you sow the wind.

Meditation should be undertaken daily. It is possible that initially you may have a sense of failure. It takes time for the mind to get trained. Also, spiritual practices require great patience. One must also pray to one's Guru and God to grant him success in meditation. For, apart from human effort, God's grace is essential, and without his grace no effort can succeed.

Meditation on Jyoti is considered to be on a higher plane than meditating on the form or name. For light is God. If you meditate on the Jyoti you may superimpose the Form in the light. Then think that the flame is located in your heart radiating rays of purity that purify the body and the mind. You may so direct your thoughts that the flame moves one by one through your limbs, the senses and the mind, burning away the dross and radiating purity.

On an even higher plane than meditation on Jyoti is Soham Dhyana. Elucidating the process Baba says that when we are in the physical and mental preparedness for meditation we may close our right nostril with the thumb and inhale slowly with the left nostril and exhale with the right nostril. After that inhale with the right and exhale with the left. This process may be repeated as many times as possible. While inhaling concentrate on God, for the sound that your breathing makes is So. While exhaling, the sound emitted is Ham. Together it forms Soham meaning 'That thou art' or 'You are God' making one conscious of one's divinity and that one is not the gross body. This should be the point of contemplation as long as this exercise continues. This meditation is Pranayam—linked or linked with breathing exercise. When this type of meditation practice becomes effortless and natural one may contemplate on the form of God the indweller in the heart while the breathing naturally goes on.

Thus, Baba has pointed out three ways of meditation viz. Meditation on the Name or Form, Meditation on Jyoti and Soham Meditation. A Sadhaka may choose the method most suitable and comfortable to him. What matters is that meditation should not cause stress and strain to the body and the mind. It should be a totally relaxed activity. But whatever method is chosen, one should stick to it. Change of place, time, method, name, and form are not conducive to meditation. So, all these should be carefully selected and then they should become part of a regular spiritual discipline.

Spiritual discipline involves avoiding sins of thought, speech and action. Hence one should avoid violence, lust, theft, eating Tamasik foodstuffs such as meat, garlic, etc., talking ill of others, harsh behaviour and speech, avarice, greed, untruth, killing animals for food, backbiting and being critical of other peoples faith.

Meditation results in heightened sensibilities and extra-sensory perceptions and experiences which are amazing and often even incredible. Very often Sadhakas get a preview of things and events of the future. When one starts having such experiences one should exercise control. He should neither be baffled nor elated. His ego also should not get inflated. Equanimity is essential in such a situation for it is equanimity that saves a Sadhaka from bringing harm upon himself.

What are the benefits of meditation ? One may ask. Meditation helps in controlling the monkey-mind which has the tendency to run after each and every object. Meditation gives peace. It grants an inner vision leading ultimately to the vision of Truth and eternal bliss. Meditation subjugates the evil tendencies in us and heightens our good qualities. The final stage of meditation is Samadhi which is a state of total detachment and desirelessness in which the Sadhaka is united with God. It is the state of Eternal Bliss.

Some people are under the mistaken belief that meditation leads to spiritual development and hence makes a man unfit for worldly existence. This is wrong. In fact meditation sharpens the intellect and insight which are assets to tide over worldly problems. Meditation awakens us to our latent potentialities and thus is an asset in the discharge of daily duties. Also, it awakens us to the Divinity within. Meditation kindles the latent energy of the subconscious mind and helps us harness it for beneficial purposes. Some people call this process by the name of awakening of the Kundalini. Meditation may also result in various kinds of Siddhis or paranormal powers. These powers must in no case be used to harm others for if so misused they recoil on the doer and ultimately bring unlimited ruin and suffering for him. As far as possible Siddhis should not be used for material benefits but for spiritual upliftment. For Siddhis are not an end in themselves but a by-product of Sadhana.

Baba has warned Sadhakas against the snares of practising Hath Yoga, Kriya Yoga and Raj Yoga. He says that these branches

of Yoga will never lead you to God-realization; they will only lead you astray. Only Prema Yoga can lead you to God, says Baba. Love is God, live in love, says he. By love he means divine or Godly love and not earthly love. That is why he preaches : Start the day with love ; fill the day with love; end the day with love; that is the way to God.

But, of one thing, be assured. Whether you come to Me or not, you are all Mine. This—Sivamaatha, this SAI MAATHA has the love of a thousand mothers towards Her children, that is why I do so much Laalana and so much paalana. Whenever I appear to be angry, remember, it is only Love in another form. For, I have not even an atom of Anger in me, I just evince My disappointment that you do not shape as I direct. When I direct you along a line of action, reflect on My Advice; you have full liberty to do so; in fact, I shall be happy if you do so; I do not like slavish obedience. If you feel that it will help you to reach the goal, follow it; if not, go to some other place; but tell Me tell you one thing : wherever you go, you will meet only me. I am every where.

—Baba : From Baba's Discourse on Sivarathri
on 11-2-64 at Prashanthi Nilayam.

Universal Religion

Baba tells us constantly about the unity of faiths. Saying that there is only one religion—the religion of Love; there is only one caste—the caste of humanity; there is only one language—the language of the heart; there is only one God—He is Omnipresent. He teaches us to revere all religions equally. What he emphasizes most is upholding of the human values of Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Santhi (Peace), Prem (Love) and Ahimsa (Non-violence). These are the fundamental principles of universal Religion.

What is truth, asked Pilate and went on to define it. But it is not easy to define Truth. Truth is the indestructible principle of life. It undergoes no change and remains unsullied at all times in all places. 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', said Keats. God is Truth and Truth is God, says Baba. He goes on to elucidate that that which undergoes change cannot be Truth. Truth remains unaffected by time. The world and worldly objects are all subject to change in form and name. They are born and they come to an end and merge in nature. How can such things be True? Our feelings, emotions, thoughts, beliefs and notions all undergo change. Hence they too cannot be the Truth. Truly speaking, God is the only Truth. He is our true friend and relative who stands by us in hours of distress. He undergoes no change. He is unaffected by time or place. What Baba has in mind is of course the Ultimate Truth and not truth in its commonsense connotation. But apart from the Ultimate Truth we use the term to convey different meanings in different contexts as related to worldly existence.

When we say that it is a truth that the earth moves round the sun, we refer to a fact of science that is constant. Similarly there are some other truths such as 'Man is mortal' or 'Sugar is sweet'. There are historical truths too such as 'Rama was the son of

Dashratha' or 'India became free on the 15th of Aug., 1947'. There are other usages of the word too. For example : 'The truth is that I did not steal your book' or 'Always speak the truth'. Thus, apart from Ultimate Truth we use the word to convey three things. First we have the laws governing the universe which we may call Universal Truths. Secondly, there are Factual Truths verifiable from occurrences of the world. Thirdly we have Moral Truths that relate to good conduct in life such as eschewing falsehood, speaking the truth etc.

ULTIMATE TRUTH refers to God. It is the formless form of God that permeates all objects—animate and inanimate—of the creation. The Atman within our gross body is also the Ultimate Truth. We are unable to cognize this truth because of the illusion of Maya that taints our vision with the tint of duality. This Maya misleads us into trusting our senses instead of our insight. We are thus led into believing transitory objects and relations as being true. Once the veil of Maya is lifted the Ultimate Truth dawns on us. For it resides within us and we cannot succeed in finding it in external objects. Our Atmic reality is The Truth, for Atma is Parmatma, and hence, as it is said in The Gita, it cannot be born, it cannot die, it cannot be pierced by arms or burnt by fire. Thus Truth transcends the five senses as well as the five elements.

UNIVERSAL TRUTHS are the manifestation of the Divine principle in creation, propagation and destruction in the universe. Those aspects of this principle which have been discovered by science to be true at all times and places are called universal truths. For example the earth revolves round the sun. The duration of days and nights and other natural laws governing the external universe are universal truths. Modern science does not accept God as the motivating force of the creation but describes the force as Nature. But it is rather difficult to comprehend and explain all the complicated processes of creation. And often the scientists, with their still limited knowledge and experience, have no answers to mysterious phenomenon. Perhaps Ultimate Truth is the motivator of the universe. Thus universal truths are a partial manifestation of the Ultimate Truth. This partial exposition is related only to the external and seen aspects of Nature.

FACTUAL TRUTHS are bound by limitations of time and place. For example 'India is a democratic republic' or 'It rained here yesterday', may be categorized as factual truths. Historical

facts such as 'Nehru died in 1964' also comes under this category. It may be argued that facts cannot be called Truths. At best they may be termed as partial truths.

MORAL TRUTHS are related to good conduct and are cherished for their spiritual significance. It followed, they help the Sadhaka in the realization of his goal. Unity of thought, words and deeds should form the basis of truthful conduct. Speaking the truth is also an aspect of moral truths. Truthful speech is unaffected by considerations of loss and gain. Untruthful conduct denies the Omnipresence of God and is part of the duality that engulfs common people.

Truthful conduct helps develop self-confidence, patience, contentment and equanimity. On the other hand deceitful conduct results in loss of confidence, frustration, mental agitation and physical ills such as hypertension etc. Truth is the basis of all morality and Sadhakas must strive towards that goal.

Among the basic human values extolled by all religions Truth is the first and foremost. We may differ regarding the name and form of God, we may also differ about the rituals to be practiced, but we all agree on the importance of Truth. That is why Baba says that Truth is God.

DHARMA is the second human value that Baba tells us to practise. The term may be used to convey different meanings in different contexts. It may be used to denote the basic characteristic of something. It may mean righteous conduct, or duty, or it may refer to the practice of certain principles of faith or religious beliefs. When we say that 'the Dharma of fire is to burn' we refer to its basic characteristic. In this sense the Dharma of man is Atma or the soul. For, it is the soul that undergoes no change whileas the body is subject to change, decay and death.

Righteous conduct is also termed Dharma. Thus, the practice of humanitarian values, compassion, truthfulness, benevolence and kindness may be said to form Manav Dharma. In this sense Dharma may be said to constitute being good, seeing good and doing good. For, that is the way to God, says Baba.

The term Dharma is also used to embody man's ideas of 'hereafter' and the Master of all the created Universe. It may be associated with a Form or it may refer to the Formless Divine. But it relates to creation, protection and destruction of material objects. The power controlling these three may be referred to as God and the

beliefs of worship and spiritual practices of a particular sect or community may be termed as Dharma or religion. Rituals may differ but all major religions commonly agree that this Cosmic Power punishes men for evil thoughts and actions and rewards them for goodness.

This brings us to the concept of Dharma as righteous action or good conduct. In this sense Dharma is related to morality. Evil actions are to be eschewed and good ones cherished. Charity, compassion, truthfulness, service to the poor and needy constitute Dharma and are common to all faiths as they relate to ethics.

The teachings of prominent spiritual thinkers as professed and practised are also labelled as Dharma. In this sense we have Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam etc.

Dharma is sometimes used as synonymous with duty. This is so only in usage in Hindi. Other languages use other words or terms to connote the sense of duty. Thus in the Indian context we talk of the son's Dharma to look after his parents or of Stree Dharma *i.e.* the duties of a woman.

We may conclude by summing up that Dharma is a pure state of mind entailing righteous action as related to man's quest for the Ultimate Reality. Baba's ideas regarding Dharma are contained in his book *Dharma Vahini* wherein he discriminates between the behavioural aspects of Dharma and what he calls *Atm Dharma*—the most exalted form. Today, man has lost sight of this *Atm Dharma* as he is totally engulfed in desires and attachments. Ego makes one dwell in the gross body alienating him from his true self. The aim of religion, says Baba, should be to sublimate the animal instincts and tendencies of man and to awaken the Divinity Within.

Often the question is asked: Does Baba propagate a new religion? Or, what is Sai Religion? "Sai Religion—if the name of religion in its literal sense of binding man to God is accepted—is the essence of all faiths and religions including those like Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Their founders and propagators were the persons filled with Love and Wisdom. Their goal and purpose were the same. None had the design to divide, disturb or destroy. They attempted to do good, see good, and be good. They sought to train the passions and the emotions, to educate the impulses and instincts and direct the faculty of reason to paths beneficial to the individual and society. They knew that the mind has to be cleansed and properly oriented.

“Sai considers that practice of these disciplines is much more essential than blind faith in a bunch of philosophical theories. First establish the reign of love between the various members in your own home. The holy duty of man is to be ever aware of the Atman that is installed in every living being. This is the basis of the brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God. Cast away the vice of egoism, the evil of greed and the poison of envy. When you seek joy from something outside you, remember that a far greater joy lies in wait within your own inner consciousness. Faith in the Almighty God is the impregnable armour that the Sadhaka can wear. Be steady, do not waver, keep straight on, hold fast to the ideal without despair. Pray until God relents; do not turn away sadly if God does not shower Grace when you expect it. Sai wants that the votaries of each religion must cultivate faith in its own excellence and realize their validity by their own intense practice. That is the Sai Religion, that feeds and fosters all religions and emphasises their common greatness. Take up this religion, boldly and joyfully.” (Baba’s Discourse—1-10-76).

SANTHI is the third pillar of Sathya Sai’s teachings. The word has no proper equivalent in English. Santhi has two aspects. The external may be referred to as Peace. Peace means absence of commotion, strife, turmoil in society or environment. The second aspect may be termed Equanimity and concerns the inner self. Equanimity means a state of mental equilibrium where the mind is in a serene and sublime state unaffected by the turbulence of emotions, passions, the five Karmendriyas (senses) and the Jnanendriyas. This state of mind is possible only through detachment from desires. Hence, equanimity is the fruit of desirelessness.

Santhi is related to five levels of our existence namely the body, the senses, the emotions, the mind and the Atma or soul. The body requires fulfilment of certain basic needs such as a minimum of food, clothes and housing. Lack of these may lead to physical discomforts resulting in loss of Santhi.

The five senses are the greatest hindrance to the acquisition of Santhi. The senses ask for appeasement of urges for touch, taste, seeing beautiful objects, sweet smells, and pleasant sounds. Such urges make a person run after various modes of pleasure. As they can never be satiated they make contentment impossible. In such a condition how can one achieve Santhi ?

Emotions too come in the way of attaining Santhi. Love, hatred, grief, anger have their origins in attachment. These emotions may be dormant or may get inflamed depending upon circumstances. When inflamed, emotions become passions leading to excitement and agitation of mind. Such a state is detrimental to Santhi.

The clear waters of the intellect are often dirtied by the emotions. In such a situation the mind's capacity to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong, is adversely affected. Mental turmoil results in loss of objective vision. Santhi, in such a state of mind, becomes a far cry.

Atmik Santhi is deeply related to our conscience. Conscience is the watchdog - judge of actions. When we cause harm, injury or injustice to someone our conscience chides us. We are unable to get Santhi in such a situation. On the other hand we get a spiritual satisfaction out of good actions. For goodness is the natural trait of the Atma. Thus, Atmik Santhi is related to our basic nature and temperament.

Basically, Asanthi has its origin in our thinking. So also, Santhi is achievable through thought-process. If our thoughts are externally oriented they will allow our passions full sway making Santhi impossible. If our thoughts are spiritually oriented they will sublimate our emotions which are conducive to Santhi. Santhi is thus a state of balance between Peace and Equanimity.

How can Santhi be attained ? Santhi is possible only through self-realization. When we do Sadhna we begin to realize that we are not the body but the Atma. With time duality is dispelled and the distinction between Atma and Parmatma disappears. Consciousness of the Divinity within makes us indifferent to the gross body and the material world. This is the state of detachment and desirelessness which is true Santhi. It is Eternal Bliss. Although to achieve this state constant spiritual effort is required, yet, success is entirely dependent on God's Grace for which constant prayer and firm faith are necessary. The final outcome is described as Prasanthi by Baba for Prasanthi means a state higher than Santhi. In his book Prasanthi Vahini Baba deals in detail about all the aspects of Santhi and how to achieve it.

Santhi within is the basis which is required for Peace in society and Universal Peace. As long as our actions are caused by selfish motives and evil passions there can be no peace around us. How

can we, then, hope for World Peace. Baba exhorts that prayers alone will not bring about world peace. Prayer does help, says he, but only when it is followed by unselfish good actions, only when the gap between thoughts, words and deeds is removed. Peace in the external world is possible only when peace within is achieved and our outlook and actions are motivated by Love.

Love is God; God is love; live in love; says Baba. For Baba himself is love personified. And his aura consists of the purest colours of love and is unmatched in its range and field of force. Love is Baba's weapon; weapon that he effectively uses to transform individuals in his mission of transforming humanity. 'Love is my form', he constantly proclaims. "I have not come for the advancement of any caste or community, nor is my goal to gather followers or believers of any particular philosophy or religion. I have come to proclaim the one and only Truth, belief and philosophy. I have come to show the path of love, the religion of love and the duty of love," said Baba in one of his discourses. There is only one God, and he can be attained only through love. "Love should become an article of faith", says he. And goes on to add: "If anyone asks for your religion, declare: Love is my religion." All the above quotes make it clear that Baba attaches supreme importance to love.

But what do we mean by the term Love? Love is indescribable and indefinable. It is something that is felt and experienced but which eludes description. To say the least it is that divine feeling or emotion which annihilates the ego and helps man attain superhuman consciousness.

Love has been the subject of innumerable poems in all the languages of the world. Kalidasa and Shakespeare have sung praises of love. "Love is not love that alters, when alteration finds," says Shakespeare. Still it has eluded the limitations of a definition.

Love can be categorised as of two kinds namely earthly love and divine love. Poets like Keats and Kalidasa have sung of earthly sensuous love whileas Surdas, Tulsi, and the metaphysical poets have sung of divine love. Even among humans love envisages subtle differences that defy description. A mother's love for her son; a father's love for his children; the love that binds lover and beloved—husband and wife; the love of devotees towards God—all these evoke different aspects of the emotion of love.

All love, whether earthly or divine, is based on the emotion of attraction. Dr. Bhagwan Das in his book 'The Science of Emotions' says that the elements of attraction and repulsion are the basis of all human emotions. Our attraction towards those who are superior to us in age, achievement, mental and spiritual stature, turns into Sraddha or devotion. Attraction towards those below us in these respects takes the form of liking or compassion. Attraction — of which repulsion is the other facet — permeates the whole creation and is called by various names such as gravitation, magnetism etc.

Worldly love, which creates, sustains and destroys all animate objects of the world, has been described as Maya or Illusion by spiritual thinkers. That aspect of this Maya which draws us to God is called Vidya Maya and the aspect which draws us away from God into gross pleasures is called Avidya Maya.

Ego is the root cause of illusion. Blinded by ego we consider the world as real and sway under the emotions of love, hate, jealousy, greed, lust, anger etc. Ego is the basis of physical or worldly love. The darkness of duality cannot be dispelled until ego is overcome. For Godly or spiritual love brooks no ego.

How can divine love be cultivated? God cannot be seen, touched or felt through our physical senses. How can we develop love towards such an entity? The answer is that we must first acquire awareness of God. This can be done through study of spiritual and religious books or through Satsang i.e. the company of self-realized or God-realized persons.

Curiosity or eagerness brings awareness of God either through the study of scripture or through the company of saints and Sadhakas. This leads to faith and results in Sadhana. Faith causes a liking for God and results in worship. Love follows. Love of God brings His Grace. In the final stage there is total surrender to God. The point thus attained is wherein the Atma and Paramatma or the soul and the Oversoul are in constant communion.

Although, it is easy to pass through this process if we worship a form, yet some people do achieve the very same results through worship of Formless God. Miracles of various Avatars attract devotees. This initial attraction later on develops and matures into love for the Divine.

Baba has said that those who portray God as cruel and insensitive, punishing man and seeking retribution, paint a false picture. God is compassionate and considerate, kind and generous.

He may seem just a little harsh when he takes steps to correct us. But even then he is like the mother who prevents her innocent child from grabbing burning embers thinking them to be stars. Or, like the doctor who injects a person with healing and curing medicine. When, therefore, we learn to accept all acts of God as intended for our welfare, we develop the same love for God as we have towards our mother. Love begets love, and, God showers more love on His devotees. While man's love for man—and often his love for God—is tainted by selfish motives God's love is pure unsullied love. All other attributes of God are just corollaries. Hence, it is said that God is Love; Love is God; for His love permeates the whole creation and generates, sustains and motivates all objects of the Universe.

'Love all; serve all,' says Baba. For service to man is service to God, he further elaborates. God, having created the Universe, is the indweller—the Krishna who is Chitchora (stealer of hearts). 'Cognise the Divinity within each man', says Baba, 'and then you can do service in its true spirit—the spirit of love'. Not charity but love should motivate us to serve. For charity is born out of ego and love annihilates ego. 'Selfishness gets and forgets, but selflessness gives and forgives'. And selfless service is possible only when we treat everyone with love. Love is thus the Divine Force present in all of us as evidence of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

"Begin the day with love; fill the day with love; end the day with love; for that is the way to God", says Baba. While as it may not be difficult to cultivate an attitude of love towards good and gentle persons, it is very difficult to do so in case of perpetrators of evil, bad, harmful deeds. In such a case, advises Baba, always keep reminding yourself that it is their gross Tamasic bodies that perform bad deeds. The Indweller Atma is as pure as it is in you. Also, form the habit of not talking ill of others, specially in their absence. Moreover, if you realize the Omnipresence of God, you will refrain, from talking ill of or doing harm to others. This is a step in the right direction, the direction of Love. For love makes us realize not only that 'Beauty is truth, but also that 'Truth is Beauty' about which Keats said that is all we need to know. Love expands, and is thus conducive to peace and universal brotherhood. The love that Baba exhorts us to develop is pure, selfless, unsullied love that does not demand, rather, is ready to sacrifice. For that alone is the way to God. 'Love is Ananda, love is power, love is light, love is God !'.

AHIMSA or non-violence follows if we succeed in inculcating Santhi and Prema. Ahimsa is commonly taken to mean non-violence i.e. not causing harm or injury to anyone. Thus, its ambit is generally considered to be restricted to our actions only. Not so, says Baba. Ahimsa should encompass not only deeds but thoughts and words too. For, thinking ill or speaking ill of others also constitutes violence.

Baba advises his devotees to abjure all forms of violence. For where there is love, there can be no place for violence. Some people argue that sacrifice of animals to propitiate gods does not constitute violence as these actions are done in surrender to God. An act surrendered to God absolves one of its consequences, they argue. Such people are misguided, says Baba. Not animals but the animal instincts of man are to be sacrificed to propitiate God, he explains. Lust, greed, avarice, anger, possessiveness and ego are the animals that need to be sacrificed. As God is the indweller in all, how can His own sacrifice please Him.

Non-violence is basic to all religions. The Vedas extol it as the highest religion. Buddha and Mahavira too laid great emphasis on Ahimsa. So did Christ. Among men, Gandhi was the greatest exemplar of the power and force of Ahimsa. Baba too lays great stress on Ahimsa. Violence breeds more violence while love breeds more love. Baba says that Violence is a Tamasik trait and advises us to be vegetarians. If we eat meat we partake of the sin of violence and if we eat Tamasik food we are given to Tamasik feelings and actions. Baba, thus, preaches total non-violence.

Having dealt in detail the five tenets that constitute Sai Religion—if the term may be used—I would like to close this chapter with a quotation from Baba. Speaking on the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the declaration of his Avatarhood on 20th of October, 1990 Baba said :

“Differences of caste and creed should be totally eschewed. Character alone should be the hall-mark of one's community. Love should become an article of faith. Morality determines the nature of a community. The answer to the question : ‘To which community do you belong ?’ should be : ‘I belong to the community of the moral’. If anyone asks for your religion, declare, ‘Love is my religion’. Develop devotion to God on this basis. Devotion alone protects the entire world and nothing else.”

Dispeller of Darkness

Baba is an Avatar. Many devotees regard him as their preceptor for there can be no better Guru than God Himself. As such we go to him often seeking answers to questions that bedevil us as Sadhakas or even as humans trying to evolve a good way of life. These questions and their answers as given by Baba have been compiled in book form too. There is the Heart of Sai by Reuben Lowenberg which has incorporated questions asked by R. K. Karanjia, editor of Blitz. More comprehensive ofcourse is J. Hislop's book 'Conversations with Baba'. Then, to top it all, Baba's own books 'Prashnottar Vahini' which is in question-answer form and 'Sandeha Nivarini'. Some of the question-answers from these books are given below :

Q. What is the significance of the Vibhuti and the trinkets you materialize and gift to people ? Is there any need for a God-man to demonstrate such miracles ?

Baba : This is evidence of my Divinity. It is not an exhibition. It is neither magic nor Siddhi power. This is the kind visiting card to convince people of my love for them.

Q. Still I do not understand why you should materialize rings, bracelets, watches and those kind of trinkets.

Baba : Most people desire talismans symbolic of my protection. When they are in trouble, they feel the grip of the ring, bracelet or watch to remember me and call me their rescue.

These trinkets give people a sense of security and protection they need in time of trouble or crisis and create a symbolic link covering the long distance between them and myself. When the devotee needs me these objects flash the message as if by wireless, and I instantly come to their rescue.

Q. But, isn't the gift of an Omega or H.M.T. watch an act of cheating the company, or breach of its patent.

Baba : It would be cheating the company or breach of the patent if it was a case of transfer of the watch from one place or other. But I do not transfer. I totally create. Whatever I will, instantly materializes.

Q. You are believed to have performed cures to the extent of resurrecting the dead. Medical experts have attested to remote-controlled surgical operations performed by you. How do you manage these ?

Baba : By my own sankalpa i.e. divine will and power. As an Avatar this power is intrinsic, inherent, total and natural to my will and decision.

This healing phenomenon has a dual aspect. I can cure, save, even resurrect people provided they are in a spiritually receptive condition. It is like the positive and negative currents of electricity. My capacity to heal may be compared to the positive current. Your devotion to me is the negative current. Once the two come together, the devotion provides what is called the miracle of healing. It is my abounding love reciprocated by the intensity of the devotee's faith in me that produces the desired result.

Q. So these are not siddhic powers or magical tricks ?

Baba : They are neither magical tricks nor siddhic powers. My powers to protect, heal, and save people, and materialize objects originate in God and can be used only by an Avatar. They flow from Cosmic Power.

Q. Some people ask why you do not materialize a pumpkin or cucumber or a watch with a distinct mark on it, to prove that it is your creation and not a transfer of somebody else's manufacture ?

Baba : Pumpkins and cucumbers can be materialized as easily as rings or objects. But these are perishable objects and the whole point of materialization lies in their permanence.

Now coming to your question about a ring or watch with a distinct mark to prove that it is my own creation. Would you like me to materialize something for you ?

Ans. Yes, Swamiji.

Baba waved his hand in the air to produce a silver ring bearing the inscription of Om in the centre with Sai Ram marks on the sides, and held the questioner's right hand to gently put it on the

third finger. It was an exact fit, and it [was precisely what he wanted from Baba.

Q. The critics of Sai Baba ask why an Avatar armed with Sankalpa Sakthi i.e. Divine Power does not help people in distress by bringing rain in times of drought or creating foodgrains where there is famine? Cannot Baba help humanity to control the natural forces and prevent calamities like earthquakes, droughts, floods, famine and epidemics?

Baba : This is precisely what I am doing by awakening the indwelling God in man to overcome such calamities. There are two ways in which an Avatar can help people : an instant solution as against a long-term one.

Any instant solution would go against the fundamental quality of nature itself as well as the Karmic law of cause and effect. Most people reap the fruits of their actions. This brings about their evolution. If the Avatar intervenes to instantly solve their problems, it would stop all action, development and even evolution. It totally negates the natural laws. The other and more effective alternative presents a long term solution, whereby the Avatar leads the people themselves to a higher level of consciousness to enable them to understand the truth of spiritual laws so that they may turn towards righteousness and steadfastly work for better conditions. This will relate them back to nature and the Karmic law. They would then transcend the cycle of cause and effect and thereby command and control the natural forces.

Q. You mean you are presently raising the consciousness of mankind to a God-like condition to enable them to control their own destiny?

Baba : Exactly. They would become shareholders of my Sankalpa Sakthi. I have to work through them, rouse the indwelling God in them, and evolve them to a higher reality in order to enable them to master the natural laws and forces. If I cure everything instantly leaving the people at their present level of consciousness they would soon mess up things and be at each other's throat.

Suffering and misery are inescapable facts of Cosmic Drama. God does not decree calamities but man invites them by way of retribution for his own evil deeds.

Q. Would you explain your socio-economic methodology as well as the machinery for the revolution ?

Baba : My methodology is a simple one based on conversion by love and the machinery is one of human cooperation and brotherhood. The basis of change is individual transformation through love. Both the wealthy and the poor want me. They come to me only on the basis of complete equality and I use them to synthesise the existing socio-economic contradictions into a cooperative brotherhood.

Q. What is your solution to the escalating conflict between wealth and power on the one side and poverty and weakness on the other ?

Baba : The transformation of both into a single cooperative brotherhood on terms of equality without competition or conflict. This can result only from Truth and Love.

I do so in many subtle ways by breaking the barriers of wealth and poverty and creating a feeling of oneness between the poor and the rich. In this Ashram you find them living together and working together, even performing manual labour, on terms of complete equality.

Despite our rigorous discipline industrialists and businessmen want to come here. Why ? Because they secure peace of mind beyond physical comfort which no wealth or power on earth can purchase or provide.

Thus we open up to them a wonderful world of spiritual treasures to gain for which they have to sacrifice material wants and comforts. This blissful state cannot be purchased. It can come only from the indwelling God that embraces poor and rich alike. This concept creates a common fellowship of give and take between the wealthy and the poor.

Q. Baba seems to be prescribing a sort of spiritual socialism based on the conversion of wealth into a trusteeship for the removal of poverty ?

Baba : Yes, A trusteeship based on love, cooperation and brotherhood. The change must evolve from the heart; it cannot be imposed from outside. All materialist doctrines have failed to bring about any real transformation.

We need to transform society from false to real values. The ideal of a high standard of living is wrong. It must be replaced

by a high level of living and thinking. People have to be convinced that the only way to rouse the latent Divinity in them is to master desires and conquer greed for pleasure and luxury.

Q. Science is advancing today while spiritualism has taken a back seat. What do you say ?

Baba : Science is still blind to the vast and invisible world of consciousness. Science is changing all the time which proves its incapacity to investigate the ultimate and absolute truth. Science is a mere glow-worm in the light and splendour of the sun. It can research, discover, and gather a lot of information about Nature and its material functions and use it for the development of worldly things. Spiritualism, on the other hand, reigns over the cosmic field where science has no place. That is why some discoveries of science are useful while others can be disastrous.

Q. According to science nothing can be created out of nothing. You have evidently negated this law of science with a transcendental formula for controlling cosmic energy and producing paranormal power. Can you explain this mystery ?

Baba : The formula that nothing can be created out of nothing is appropriate to the limited field and dimensions of science. It does not at all apply to the transcendental field and dimensions of spirituality. In the latter field anything can be created by the Supreme Will. All that exists can be made to disappear, and what does not exist can be made to appear. Material laws do not apply to Divinity. What I will happens. What I order materializes.

Q. How do you propose to save humanity from a nuclear holocaust ?

Baba : By removing all causes, sources, barriers and provocations of class, caste, creed, colour and race and replacing the existing hate and violence with love and non-violence.

Q. Swamiji ! We would like to know something about your triple incarnation.

Baba : They are not separate. I have already mentioned the complete oneness of the three is the final objective of the mission. The Avatar of Shirdi Sai laid the base for secular integration and gave mankind the message of Duty that is Work. The mission of the present Avatar is to make everybody realize that since the same God or Divinity resides in everyone, people should respect, love and help one another irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Thus

every Work can become an act of Worship. Prema Sai, the third Avatar, shall promote the evangel that not only does God reside in everyone himself is God.

Q. So, what are in sum the holy mission and divine purpose of this tripe incarnation ?

Baba : To unite all mankind into one caste or family with the establishment of divinity in everyone. We have to make everyone realize the God within him to develop a synthesis correlating thought word and deed.

Q. Sceptics wonder why God should assume a human form ?

Baba : The Avatar takes the human form and behaves in a human way so that humanity can feel kinship with Divinity. At the same time he rises to Godly heights so that mankind can also aspire to reach God. The realization of the indwelling God as Avatars the motivator of life is the task for which Avatars come in human form.

Q. Is there a creator of the beautiful variegated manifestations of Nature ?

Baba : That magician is God. He is the benefactor of all. Saints and sages have described his attributes and forms and contemplated and meditated upon the same. Thus they have given a form and attributes to the formless and attributeless. Sastras, Vedas and Upanishads proclaim His existence on the basis of spiritual experiences of saints and sages of yore.

Q. God has been given many names and forms. Are they equally effective ?

Baba : Call Him by any name or form, for all names and forms are His.

Q. What is Moksha or salvation ?

Baba : That which is burdened by ego is Jivi. Ego assumes a name and form. When ego and name and form are merged in God, that is salvation. Duality is Maya or illusion. When the darkness of illusion is dispelled Moksha is attained.

Q. Can a childless person attain salvation ?

Baba : The sage Suka Deva had no son. Do you think he did not attain salvation ? I can assure you that no spiritual loss or handicap is suffered by those who do not have a son.

Words of Wisdom

Baba's discourses have been the source of infinite wisdom. During these discourses he has been dealing with all kinds of religious and spiritual topics. His discourses have been published under the title of *Sathya Sai Speaks* (Vols 1 to 12). In this chapter we propose to dwell upon Baba's views on the following topics :

1. Spiritual matters
2. Religious matters
3. Sadhana
4. The doctrine of Karma and Destiny
5. India and its culture
6. Education
7. Economic and physical matters.

The words of wisdom compiled in this chapter have been culled from his discourses. Though all efforts have been made to convey Baba's ideas truthfully, translation cannot be as effective as original expression. Moreover, taken out of context, some ideas may not convey what they are actually intended to convey. Baba's style is epigrammatic and he uses anecdotes to illustrate the truths that he expounds.

1. Spirituality

Baba has, at one time or the other, touched upon all the possible aspects of spirituality. Here we have sampled a few.

God—The whole universe is the body of God. Each atom reflects His power mystery and inscrutability. God is the final Truth pervading all objects, animate as well as inanimate.

God is omnipresent and we can understand only His partial aspects through our limited knowledge. Most of the time we are unaware of the all-pervading God just as we are unaware of the motion of the earth.

Love is God; God is Love. Your parents may forsake you but God shall never forsake you for God is your Indweller. Firm belief in God removes the illusion of duality.

God cannot be cognized by the senses for He is the Reality above and beyond the senses. He is not separate from His creation.

Religions define God under limitations. Each religion sees only limited aspects of God. Those who say God is nowhere infact mean God is now here.

Brahman—Om is referred to as the one-letter Brahman. In the beginning there was the Word. And the Word was with God. To begin with there was the one God. Then he decided to have many forms.

Brahman has three attributes viz Sat, Chit and Ananda. Brahman, has Truth, Beauty and Omnifelicity also as attributes.

God is given many forms. Worshippers of Siva call him Pasupathi which means Lord of animals or master of the bonded beings. Others worship Krishna and call him by the name of Gopala which means protector of cattle or master of the bonded beings. But both sects have no love or regard for each other. Saivites consider Siva to be the creator, benefactor and destroyer of all beings while worshippers of Krishna accord Him the same status. Both are blinded by duality for all names and forms belong to God, the creator, preserver and destroyer.

Sakthi—The three aspects of Sakthi are visualized as three separate forms. The Sathwik aspect is represented by Saraswathi the goddess of learning and fine arts. Laxmi, the goddess of wealth represents the Rajasik aspect and Mahakali, the Tamasik aspect. Durga symbolizes omnipresence, omnipotence, omnifelicity. She is the indweller that can be realized through Sadhana and through the female element she pervades all nature.

Hanumana is courage personified. He is the light that dispels disappointment. Courage helps us cross the ocean of illusion.

Other Gods—Varun is the rain god. Prosperity and health are bestowed by Sun god. Ganapati the elephant-headed God is the first among gods. He removes hindrances and is worshipped first on all occasions and ceremonies. Mother Earth looks after all vegetation and the Moon controls crops and herbs. Kartikeya or Murugan is the god of war.

Many people, particularly westerners, are perplexed at the multiplicity of Gods in the Hindu pantheon. They ask whether the Omnipotent One God is not enough for worship. Baba explains that the various gods and goddesses are heads of various departments under the omnipotent God. That is why prayers for different things are addressed to the concerned deities.

Avatar—When God descends on the earth, the form that He assumes is known as Avatar. An Avatar carries all the power and attributes of the Divine One.

When man becomes oblivious of the Divinity within, when there is moral decay and decline, when animal passions rule the roost, when righteousness is forgotten, God incarnates to reestablish virtue and goodness and to lead mankind back to truth and righteousness.

Lord Krishna gave indications of his Avatarhood step by step preparing the people around him to cognize his Divinity through miracles. Similar has been the approach of Baba.

Rama came to resurrect Dharma or righteousness. Hence he had to be an exemplar, through his own righteous conduct, of love, duty-consciousness etc. He vanquished evil and through his own conduct set an example of the ideals he professed.

Krishna is considered as a Poornavtar having all sixteen attributes. It is said that Rama had fourteen attributes and one was with the sage Parashurama till the latter—on realizing the Avatarhood of Rama—surrendered the one attribute to Rama. One attribute was shared by the three brothers of Rama.

The Avatars before the advent of Rama are said to have incarnated for some single objective of either punishing some evildoer or saving some devotee in distress. Rama and Krishna incarnated for the establishment of Dharma and for the welfare and reform of the society in general. They confirmed that Truth and goodness always triumph and evil and untruth cannot but be vanquished.

The very name of Rama redeems mankind. It consists of three letters namely Ra, a, and ma. Ra represents fire which destroys evil tendencies. 'A' stands for the Sun, which dispels the darkness of ignorance and 'ma' denotes the Moon which provides cool comfort. Thus Rama absolves us of three sins, protects us and grants Sat, Chit, Ananda. Rama is Truth, Beauty and Omnifelicity personified.

Rama thrives on the Love and devotion that his devotees have for him. He is like the bee that thrives on honey. Recitation of the name of Rama brings salvation. Ra represents Brahman and 'ma' represents jivi. 'A' is the link that joins the two. Constant recitation of the name of Rama is like reaping the fruits of the wish-fulfilling tree. Rama is the bestower of bliss. Sai Rama is the living Avatar—Bliss personified.

Krishna was known for his leelas or miracles. Right from his birth Krishna revealed his Divinity through various divine deeds. Pootna—the she-devil—was sent to kill him. Instead, Krishna killed her even when he was an infant. As he grew up, he defeated and killed various other demons till finally he vanquished the evil king Kamsa his own kinsman. Killing of Kamsa symbolises the triumph of good and righteousness over evil.

SAI AVATAR is the present incarnation. 'Sa' means divine; 'ayee' means mother; Baba means father. Sai Baba is thus our divine mother and father. He has come to awaken us to our true divine nature. He is the embodiment of Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnifelicity. He has come to establish the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Truth shall triumph and Baba is Truth personified. Establishment of Vedic Dharma is his mission.

Baba has declared: 'My power is unlimited; my truth is impregnable. I can never fail in my goal. My will shall be fulfilled. I am, Truth and truth always triumphs.'

Materialism is the order of the day. Today, immorality is paraded as morality. People challenge the very existence of God. Truth and justice are forgotten and forsaken. No reverence is shown to saints and sages. In such times Sathya Sai has incarnated for the establishment of righteousness and values of life. Baba moves about and behaves like humans but has unleashed an invisible social and moral revolution through his discourses, through Bal Vikas, Seva Dal and value-based educational system. Millions are being inspired to aspire to be good, to do good and to see good.

'Because I move about among you, eating and talking like a human being, you are deluded into considering me as a mere human being', says Baba. And goes on to add 'I charm you through conversation singing and joining in other activities with you. But all this is illusion. My divinity is ready to be revealed every moment

and you should be ever watchful for that moment. You have to remove the illusion to see my divinity. Experiences of my divinity make your faith more firm. Your ego, instability and suspiciousness give birth to doubts, preventing you from knowing the truth about me.'

'Doubts are the greatest hindrance. Do not try to know me. You can never unravel the divine mystery. Endless arguments and discussions will lead you nowhere. You must try to cognize your own divinity. Watch your ideals, efforts and their results.'

'You cannot understand my mystery either today or even after sustained effort of thousands of years of penance and spiritual effort even if all mankind joins in the effort. Experience and enjoy the showers of bliss that I have come to give you. You are most fortunate to be able to avail the opportunity which is rare even for saints and sages, Yogis and Sadhakas'.

'In all ages many people though physically close to the Avatars, have been blind to their divinity. Similarly, many people today exaggerate the importance of my miracles which are only a very insignificant aspect of my divinity. I pity such people for they fail to see the Truth underlying the miracles.'

'Man, through his limited experience and knowledge cannot understand the mystery of God.'

God's grace is like butter and melts through the warmth of love. Namasmara is fire that draws compassion of God.

'I have come to shower grace. You receive that grace through Darshan, Sparsana and Sambhasana i.e. sight, touch and conversation. True prayer draws compassion and grace from me. I am within you. Persuade me, command me, for I am the indweller of your heart and am always at your beck and call. Establish the link of love, for love is God.'

Sadhana must be done to strive for God's grace. Cut your ego clean across. Develop the desire and eagerness for divine experience. Just as there are minimum qualifications laid down for a job, similarly, the minimum qualifications to merit God's grace are egolessness, control of senses and purity of food etc. The heart has to be rid of evil passions and tendencies. Then only will it be pure enough to become the shrine of the Lord. Prayer is necessary not only for spiritual development but even for physical well-being.

In whatever you do, you should put in all your capacity and effort. Have patience and firm faith. If you have these, God will shower His grace on you. Only when you put in sincere effort and endeavour shall success come your way. This is as true of spiritual matters as of material things.

You can pray to and call upon God at any place, even from a cremation ground. He shall appear in the name and form in which you visualize Him. God always answers the call if it comes from a pure and sincere heart free of evil designs and desires.

The cosmic power of the Atma is latent in all beings. Some know how to utilize it; some are simply aware of it; some do not know how to harness it; and some are totally unaware of its existence. Atma is eternal bliss, the unchanging Truth.

Atma is covered over by five sheaths which have to be refined to cognize the true self. These sheaths are the Annamaya Kosh, Pranmaya Kosh, Manomaya Kosh, Vijñanamaya Kosh and Anandmaya Kosh, namely the sheaths of food, life breath, feelings, knowledge and Bliss. The sheath of food can be refined through intake of pure and Sathvik food. Life-breath can be purified through Pranayama, etc. Pure thoughts and feelings are other attributes. The pursuit of knowledge should be aimed at Truth and detachment. Bliss can be gained through search for Divinity.

One must enhance four kinds of capabilities : physical, mental, capacity to discriminate and moral strength. These four grant one strength and determination which are necessary for spiritual achievement.

Both Jivi and Brahman are truly Sat, Chit, Ananda. The realization of their oneness is Advaita. Duality or delusion makes us consider them as separate.

God permeates the creation. If one gets the grace of God, creation becomes subservient to his will. The body is the creation whileas Prana or Life-Force is God.

God has laid down infallible laws for the governance of the creation. All motions animate and inanimate objects and static objects are controlled by these laws. The coordinated rhythmic movement of the universe is guided by these divine rules. Nature is ever changing in its forms and splendour. But God is the basic truth of all Nature just as thread is the basic form of all cloth.

2. Religion

Innumerable beliefs and sects are like the innumerable branches of a large tree. Each is relevant to its adherents. One should not find faults with the others. All paths lead to but one God. Different saints and sages like Buddha, Christ, Zorashtra, Mohammed, Adi Sankara discovered the Cosmic Reality in his own way and accordingly are worshipped as prophets by large sections of humanity. Their teachings form the basis of the religions proclaimed by their names. But basically all religions lay emphasis on love, brotherhood, non-violence, righteousness, truth and peace. All religions teach us to discard ego, evil desires and evil propensities. They tell us not to run after momentary pleasures but to try to cognize God that is the only Truth. We must cultivate detachment, they say.

Ways of worshipping God and the rituals practiced may differ according to the various religions. But that is immaterial. The goal is one and the same.

Sanatana Dharma—The undying, unchanging universal religion is the meaning of the term Sanatana. It is the all encompassing religion. Sanatan Dharma preaches the practice of truth and tells us to abjure jealousy, anger etc. It teaches love for all.

There are three basic characteristics of Sanatana Dharma namely the importance of Karma, reincarnation and belief in Avatars. Most of the Hindus share these beliefs.

Sanatan Dharma exhorts us to revere our parents, teachers and gods. Respect for elders and love for brothers and sisters, and duty-conscious behaviour is the essence of Hindu scriptures such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Indian cultural heritage and traditions are the best for Indians.

Idolatry—Worship of idols as gods is simply an easy way of concentrating on God. It is easier to worship a form than to meditate on the formless. But it should lead to cognition of God as the indweller in all. Idols are helpful in the initial stages of Sadhana.

See Sai in all, says Baba. Therefore, says he, love all, serve all. Temples and idols help in sublimating our feelings and sentiments. Worship a picture as God but do not worship God as a picture alone, teaches Baba.

Many people criticize idol worship. One should not criticize the religious beliefs of others for each one of us has a right to approach God in our own way and according to our own faith.

The Vedas—The Vedas are the sumum bonum of all knowledge. They are ageless and timeless, the root and basis of Indian culture. They embody the mantras, spiritual rules and disciplines needed for the realization of the Divinity within. The Vedas lead us from darkness unto light, removing our ignorance which is the impediment to God-realization.

The Vedas can neither be analysed nor commented upon. They are Srutis i.e. the audio source to enlightenment and bliss. The Vedas are the quintessence of the 'tapas' of sages endeavouring for Truth. The resultant divine experiences are embodied in the Vedas. They are embodiments of the Grace of God. They guide us in discriminating between Truth and untruth, the permanent and the ephemeral, right and wrong, good and bad.

Vedanta—Vedanta is a particular aspect of Vedic thought. The Upanishads are components of Vedanta. The Upanishads are the result of search for eternal truths of life and deep thought over them.

The Geeta—The Geeta contains teachings and guidance useful for the conduct of Karma in a detached manner. It shows what the approach to life and its problems should be. Krishna is the dispeller of darkness who makes Arjuna realize that man is simply an actor in the drama of life. The real doer is God, the motivator to all action. The Geeta is the supreme example of harmonious coordination of Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga i.e. Duty, Knowledge and Worship—the threefold path to God. To one who reads the Geeta with humility and sincerity it is full of meaning and moment. We should not adopt a ritualistic approach to this scripture. Rather, we should try to follow the teachings which will help us become better human beings till we realize the Divinity inherent in the whole creation.

Together with the Upanishads and the Drahmasutra the Geeta forms a trinity of spiritual guidance that is highly revered and followed by spiritual aspirants. Together, they lead us to salvation.

Gayatri—'That which protects him who sings (adores) it' is the word meaning of Gayatri. The Gayatri Mantra is considered to be the most potent of all the 'mantras'. It consists of three parts

i.e. meditation, contemplation and prayer. It is an adoration to the Supreme light of universe and prayer to guide our intellect in pursuit of Truth. The word 'Savitra' means the Creator of the universe. We adore and meditate on the supreme light and then extend our prayer to dispel our inherent darkness and lead us into light. Baba's elucidation of the Gayatri is contained in E. B. Fanibunda's book 'Vision of the Divine'. Japa of the Gayatri protects us against evil forces, bad influence, evil propensities and harm and grants us material and spiritual progress.

The Puranas—The Puranas are the historical aspect of spirituality containing descriptions of the creation etc. Their basic aim is to reveal and exemplify the unchanging philosophic truths contained in the vedas and upnishads. Their narrative form helps in making terse topics interesting to the common reader. They contain parables related to the lives of ancient sages, saints, kings and Avatars. Spiritual and moral principles are exemplified through them.

Bhagvat Purana—It unravels the mystery of God and His creation and acquaints us with the glory and powers of God. It reveals the truth regarding Atma and Parmatma.

Ramayana—Rama is Purush and Sita is Prakriti. Together they form the basis of Ramayana. Hanumana symbolizes patience and courage. Rama crosses the sea of illusion to destroy Kumbakarna and Ravana—symbols of Tamas and Rajas respectively. He performs coronation of Vibhishana—the symbol of Sathvik Guna. Dasratha—Rama's father—symbolizes ten senses—five Karmendriyas and five Jnanendriyas. His four sons viz. Rama, Bharata, Laxmana and Satrughna represent Sathya, Dharma, Prema and Santhi i.e. Truth, Righteousness, Love and Peace.

3. Spiritual Practices

God-realization requires spiritual practices, discrimination, detachment, discipline etc. Have firm faith and practise meditation and contemplation of God. Do not run after sensual pleasures. Move from I to We and then to Us All, i.e. expand your feelings and thoughts. Aspire for God-realization. Merge all desires into the one desire of being one with God.

Most important is faith for faith can move mountains. Do not allow the ups and downs of life to weaken your faith. Foster your faith through Satsang i.e. the company of good people and reading good books such as Sai literature. Baba says that man runs

after the world and worldly desires. Desires are endless and they can never be fulfilled. This causes disappointment resulting in weakening of faith. Hence, forsake worldly desires. Cultivate the desire for spiritual development. Then you will not be afflicted by doubts. Have firm faith in God. Faith shall grant all that you need. Listen to the voice of your conscience, for that is the voice of God.

Spiritual progress is not a mental exercise. It results from good thoughts, words and deeds. When God is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent where is the need to run after any other source. He is the source of True Bliss. It is He who grants peace and prosperity. He can turn any metal into Gold by his mere will. Therefore, have confidence in yourself and faith in God.

Sense-control—essential for spiritual progress—can be attained through concentration, meditation and Japa. Until senses are controlled man cannot rise above his animality. The mind, too, should not be allowed to become a prey to evil thoughts. For evil thoughts agitate us and agitation does not allow peace of mind. Our actions should not result from thoughtless reactions to other people's thoughts and actions. Action should result after deliberation and discrimination.

Namasmarna—Recitation of God's name causes 'Chitta-suddhi' or purification of thoughts. The tongue should be led away from sensory pleasures into the supreme bliss of reciting the name of the Lord. Recitation brings grace of God provided it is not a mere mechanical exercise. Recitation should be simultaneous with contemplation on the form and glory of God. Namasmarna is the best way to destroy ego and finally results in causing an end to Duality or Mithya and unification of the soul with the Oversoul. That is the highest stage of Sadhana.

Namasmarna transforms your character and conduct. Namasmarna may be done with or without rosary. A rosary keeps count of the number of times the name or Mantra is recited. It also helps in concentration. Recitation of the name without rosary is easier and may be done at any time or place. Gradually it becomes synchronous with all actions purifying thoughts, words and deeds. What matters is not the number but the feeling of total surrender, while reciting the name of the Lord.

Worship—Worship is not merely offering flowers etc. and incense to God. We have to offer all our actions, emotions and

thoughts in their purest form as flowers to God. Prayer is the most potent means to draw the grace of God. But prayer should spring from the depths of the heart and should aim at the welfare of all.

Jyoti—Jyoti or the flame of the lamp represents God. For God is the dispeller of darkness. Jyoti helps in concentration and meditation. Remove the darkness of ignorance that lies within and instal God in all his splendour to illumine your thoughts and feeling.

Sacrifice—Baba says that it is a travesty of religion to sacrifice animals or beings in the name of God. For God dwells within them also, and how can He be pleased by His own sacrifice. In fact we must sacrifice our animal passions such as hatred, jealousy, anger, ego etc. to please God. Charity is also sacrifice and we must share our prosperity with the needy and the poor.

Thyaga—Thyaga is different from charity. The highest kind of Thyaga is to surrender the fruits of our actions to God. Thyaga does not consist in giving alms etc. All evil tendencies and propensities are to be given up. Thyaga brings contentment and bliss. A true devotee is ready to surrender even his life-breath at the Lotus Feet. Egolessness is the result of Thyaga. Tapas does not consist in strenuous exercises or in donning the ochre robe and running away from worldly duties. Purity of thoughts words and deeds is the highest Tapas.

Pilgrimage—The purpose of pilgrimage is not to purify the body. Sins are not washed away by holy dips. Pilgrimage should result in humility, compassion and expansion of outlook. Ostentation should be abjured while undertaking pilgrimage. The journey from the external world into your inner self, resulting in God-realization, is the best pilgrimage. However, visits to religious places like Prasanthi Nilayam foster faith, devotion, and spiritual discipline. One gets Ananda or Bliss.

Five Gems—‘Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence are dear to me’, says Baba. ‘Adhere to them in your daily life. The Sathya Sai Organization should foster love, should spread the message of love. The members should exude love in their thoughts, words and actions thus presenting an ideal for others to follow.’

Truth--Speak the truth and adhere to truthful conduct. Initially you will face difficulties but finally truth shall triumph. But don't hurt the feelings of others by always uttering bitter truth. Always weigh what you say. Truth should be the beacon that leads you from darkness to light.

Love--Love does not mean physical attraction or emotional infatuation. The attachment of parents to children may be called *Sneha*. The attraction between opposite sexes may be termed sensuality. Between two friends their is the bond of friendship or amity. Feelings towards worldly possessions can be called attachment. Love is a divine feeling which is of purest ray serene. God is Love hence love God. The world is subject to decay. Hence, God alone can be the object of true love. Love makes us realize the divinity inherent in all objects of this creation. Love overcomes hatred and jealousy, distress and disappointment. Love beautifies the whole creation. That is why Baba says that Love is God, God is love, live in Love ! Love all, serve all, is his message. Only through love will we be able to see Sai in all.

4. Karma and Destiny

According to the law of cause and effect each action bears fruit. Good and bad actions bear fruits accordingly. Our actions shape our destiny and determine our fate in the next birth. Man himself decides his destiny. Once this is realized man will not blame God for his sufferings. Then it is that he approaches God with a pure heart and equanimity.

Realization of the truth about oneself and about God, added with spiritual effort, draws the grace of God. Grace can reduce or even wash away the effects of bad Karma. Thus it is that spiritual effort moulds the course of Destiny. Hence, one must take up *Sadhana* in right earnest. The sooner the better.

Some people wrongly believe that *Sadhana* and *Namasmarana* is to be taken up in old age. Clarifying the issue Baba says that *Sadhana* brooks no delay. Begin as early as possible, when your senses and mind are fully alert. In old age the body will be racked by diseases. The mind will be troubled by thoughts of death. These will not allow you to meditate or even concentrate. How can you hope for spiritual effort when you will not have any control over the body and the mind ? One who starts early, reaches the goal. The given moment is now. Act and have control over your destiny.

Some people believe that whatever is fated shall happen. But without due action you will not get even what you deserve. For if you hold a fruit in your hand you will not get its juice. To get its juice you will have to crush the fruit. Hence, actions must be performed. Do not underrate your capacities. For God resides within you. Hence act and frame your destiny in harmony with the Divinity Within.

5. India and its Culture

BHARATA means the country where there is love for God. India is a land of pious rivers and mountains. It is sanctified by the Ganga and various saints, sages and temples situated in Rishikesh, Haridwar, Varanasi, Prayag, Mathura etc.

India is also known for its philosophy embodied in the Vedas, Upanishads, Sastras, scriptures and epics. Bharata has provided sustenance to saints and sages, Jnanis and Sadhakas. It is known for its culture and spiritual attainments which have survived on the basis of its Yoga and Thyaga.

The universe is the body of God. India may be compared to the eyes of the Universe. Today India is facing difficult times. The patience and faith of its people are on test. The women of India must be given proper respect and esteem. For they are personifications of love, compassion, sacrifice, courage, patience and devotion. We must not look down upon women. They must be given their due status in society.

Unfortunately, we tend to copy westerners in every thing today. This has resulted in loss of moral and spiritual values and degeneration in general. Baba lays great stress upon value-based education. Emphasis on human values is the hall-mark of Sathya Sai Institutions. Thus, effort is on to restore India to its pristine glory once more. We must not imitate the West blindly. We should take only the good and beneficial things from others. This can happen only when the faculty of discrimination is developed. For that, spiritual effort is essential.

6. Modern Life and World Peace

Life today has become a competitive race in which selfish materialism is the motivating force. A society based on acquisition and avarice is prey to fear—fear of loss, of destruction, of defamation, deterioration, decline and death. Man today runs after

sensuous pleasures instead of permanent Bliss that lies in God-realization.

Religious bigotry is the order of the day. The teachings of none of the religions are practised. Faith is scarcely to be found. Ostentation has replaced the search for Truth. People revel in gambling, and other sensuous pleasures. Promiscuousness has replaced morality. People feel ashamed of going to temples and Bhajan centres. Money is the measure of achievement. Worldly possessions have become status-symbols. One-upmanship has become the order of the day. Baba has incarnated to replace all this with the ideals of service, truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence. Drugs are to be replaced by Vibhuti if mankind is to survive. And reclamation is Baba's mission.

Many people sing praises to scientific advancement. But has man really progressed? Is it not that science has led us from fear to horror; from destruction to devastation? We have assembled assets for our own elimination. The whole environment is polluted. How can one hope for peace and inner satisfaction in such a world? For one is all the time oppressed by mortal fear.

The cause of the malaise of the world today is that the spiritual progress has not been commensurate with physical advancement. For balanced development moral advancement too is necessary.

World Peace—The whole world and its inhabitants are the creation of God. God made all and loves all. But we human beings are deluded by duality born out of our selfishness. We must realize the underlying unity and love all people of all climes and religions. Men today are motivated by narrow ends. Hatred cannot end hatred; violence cannot quell violence. That is why Baba gives the message of love. If we realize the Divinity inherent in all, we shall develop love for all. It is only then that world peace will be possible.

Little realizing all this we involve ourselves in meaningless and endless conflicts. Science too has misled man to equate himself with the Creator. Man is bedevilled by industrial and scientific problems. Economic, political and religious problems too prevent him from attaining peace.

The materialistic pursuits of the modern world have made man deceitful and morally depraved. He is oppressed by fear and anxiety. The world is threatened with war. Everyone, every

country, is in search of peace. India has to show the path. We have to delve deep within ourselves if we want peace. Only when universal love is realized can peace be attained.

7. Education

"Education lends beauty to man. Education is man's most precious wealth. It confers happiness and renown on man. It is the teacher of teachers", said Baba in his convocation address to the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning on 22nd of November, 1990.

Degrees alone do not signify education. Together with knowledge of the physical sciences, one has to acquire humility, discipline, and a good character. Education is intended not merely to stuff the brain with information. It has to transform the heart and make it pure. Education that does not lead to permanent bliss, equal-mindedness and realization of the Divinity in all things, is not fit to be called education.

True education leads the heart and mind to purity of thoughts, words and deeds. The student of today is concerned with acquiring wealth, strength and position, but not good qualities. "The discipline that should prevail in him has deteriorated. The sacred feelings that should inspire educational establishments have disappeared. Reverence and respect are not to be seen. Money has been elevated to the primary place." It is only when a student is filled with sacred thoughts that he will be able to serve society properly and make himself a better human being.

"The student today has to cultivate nine gem-like qualities : the spirit of sacrifice, humility, the spirit of selfless service to society, friendliness, discipline, adherence to truth, love, non-violence and faith in God. The boys and girls who have these qualities alone, will be nation's treasure of virtue and ensure its future." (Baba's Discourse 22. 11. 90)

True education is that which fosters the sense of oneness, draws out one's divine qualities and promotes the blossoming of human personality. Education today is concerned with worldly comforts, but it should seek to promote, in addition to worldly knowledge, concern for spiritual development.

Students should aspire to promote the nation's well-being its security and happiness. Selflessness, absence of egoism, unostentatiousness and true love should be the hall-marks of a true

student. There should be no room for compromises and relaxations in the educational field.

The present educational system does not acquaint the students with the glorious Indian culture. Educational administrators do not try to understand the real problems, afflicting education. Lucrative jobs have become the aim of education. Thus education today gives begging bowls to students. The aim of education should be to educate, not to provide jobs only.

Education should cultivate human values and inculcate the spirit of reverence, sacrifice, love, non-violence, service, charity, sense-control and other such good qualities so that students share and uphold the glory that is India.

Teachers should be true, sincere, and committed to upholding human values. They are the moulders of a nation's destiny. Teachers should not have a mercenary approach to education. They should be the source of inspiration to students.

Teachers are responsible for the character and actions of students. They should eschew selfishness and politics. Teachers should foster the spirit of fraternity and should have the welfare of the student as their goal. They should set examples of good conduct before their students. Teachers should seek inspiration from the Gurus of yore.

8. Miscellaneous Topics

Money should be earned through good means and spent in good work. The aim of earning money (Arth) should be Dharma (Righteousness) and the aim of desires (Kama) should be Moksha (Salvation).

Earn money but do not be too attached to it. Spend it as a trustee of the poor and needy with social welfare as the objective.

Earn money through good and righteous means not through evil and unethical methods. If you usurp the rightful share of others, God shall never forgive you. Charity and service of man should be linked to earning money.

The Body is the temple of God. The five senses are the doors of this temple. Whatever goes in through these doors should be pure and only that should enter which is fit to be offered to God.

Do not pamper your body. A healthy and strong body is necessary for spiritual effort and progress. But it should not be

given undue importance. Eat Sathvik food to beget Sathvik thoughts. The body is the instrument of service to God. Hence the importance of pure and good thoughts words and deeds. Abjure lust, anger and the other deadly sins for they pollute the body and the mind making it unfit for abode of the Lord.

Good conduct will bring longevity and hence more visions of Divinity and more bliss. Food should be tasty, eatable and good. It should not be hot and spicy. Neither should it be lacking in nutritive value. Rajasik food causes agitations. Tamasik food leads to bad and lustful thoughts. Sathvik food gives peace of mind and healthy body. Food consists of all that we take in through our five senses.

Pure food results in pure thoughts and is conducive to spiritual upliftment. Intoxicating drinks agitate the body and the mind leading to loss of sense-control. An intoxicated man has no control over his tendencies, speech and actions. Non-vegetarian food agitates the mind and arouses animal passions and evil tendencies.

Food is God and must not be wasted. Also, eat only as much as the body needs. Excess eating causes harm to the body and mind. Simple food is conducive to good health. Eat to live but do not live to eat only.

Have regular habits of food, sleep and exercise. Discipline should be exercised in these matters. The body is the chariot that takes you to God. Hence the body must be fostered with care and discrimination. It is the instrument for God-realization. Irregular and indiscriminate habits have led to increase in diseases. Ostentation also leads to moral and physical maladies.

Although food and environmental pollution are, to a large extent, responsible for disease and discomfort of man, a major reason is mental agitations, prejudice and perverted thoughts. Unfulfilled ambitions and despair also cause illness. Loss of faith adds to the problem.

Many diseases can be got rid of through meditation and spirituality. God-madness is better than world-madness. Namasmara brings peace and reduces tension. Thoughts of God becalm the agitated mind and passion-charged body.

Anxiety and worry is the root cause of many diseases. Sadhana helps in getting rid of anxiety and hence ensures peace.

Pray, pray and pray to God. For constant prayer brings showers of Grace. If you have gained Grace, you have gained everything. Health and prosperity shall follow in the wake of God's grace. Have firm faith. For faith can move mountains. Surrender your ego at the Lotus Feet, and rise stronger. The end of wisdom is freedom; the end of culture is perception; the end of education is character; the end of knowledge is Love. Live in Love, for Love is God !

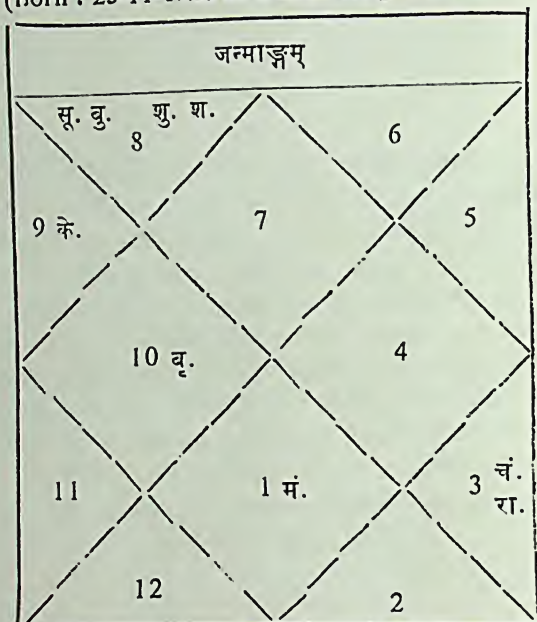


If god is implanted in the heart, you will see only God every where, even in the objective world. For SARVAM BRAHMAMAYAM is a fact. Resolve this day to engage only in virtuous deeds, good thoughts, good Company. Let your mind dwell on elevating thoughts. Do not waste a single moment of your waking time in idle gossip or vain boasting or demeaning recreations. Death stalks behind you to fell you and carry you off.....So while life persists, do good things, speak soft and sweet, never injure or insult another, serve those in need and keep the image of God ever before the mind's eye.

—Baba : From Baba's Discourse in Prashanthi Nilayam on 14-1-64.

APPENDIX 'A'

Horoscope of Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(Born : 23-11-1926 at 6 minutes past 5 AM)



Sequence of Mahadashas :

1. Of Rahu—From birth till 23-8-1930; Troublesome.
2. Of Brihaspati—23-8-30 to 23-8-46; Normal.
3. Of Sani—23-8-46 to 23-8-65; Advent of divine power.
4. Of Buddha—23-8-65 to 23-8-82; Increase in spiritual status.
5. Of Ketu—23-8-82 to 23-8-89; Towards peace.
6. Of Sukra—23-8-89 to 23-8-2009; Avatarhood.
7. Of Sun—23-8-2009 to 23-8-2015; Establishment of Golden Age.
8. Of Moon—23-8-2015 to 23-8-2025; Living Incognito.

Will be as famous and powerful as the greatest emperor, Brahmjnani and Brahman Incarnate.

—As forecast by Dr. Upendra Kumar Sharma
M.A., Ph. D. of Bhiwani

APPENDIX 'B'

World Charter of Sri Sathya Sai Organization

PERMANENT CHARTER granted by BHAGWAN SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA to SRI SATHYA SAI ORGANIZATIONS; AT THE THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE DATED this 14th day of January, in the 55th year of His Advent, Anno Domini 1981. BHAGWAN SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA out of His Infinite Grace and Mercy sends Blessings to all whom this Permanent Charter shall be seen, showed or read.

WHEREAS the advent of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as declared by Him is for the establishment of Sanathana Dharma.

AND WHEREAS this World Organisation is a Spiritual Organization founded for the whole Mankind, not recognizing any distinction or separateness on the basis of religion, caste, colour or creed.

AND WHEREAS this Organization takes within its fold persons belonging to all religions in order to establish unity of all faiths AND WHEREAS; it is for establishing and promoting the content of Such Sanathana Dharma and also to establish oneness of all thoughts that the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations are taking existence.

AND WHEREAS the most fundamental object of this Organization as laid down by Bhagwan is to "Awaken in Man the awareness of the Divinity INHERENT in him" by propagating through practice and examples the basic principles of Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Santhi (Peace) and Prema (Love) set by Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

AND WHEREAS to experience this Divinity, mere environment and circumstances outside are not sufficient but a change in the minds of men is necessary.

AND WHEREAS the activities of the Organization are only means to the spiritual progress in this direction and which progress will ultimately enable everyone to enjoy inner peace notwithstanding the stresses and strains, the frustrations and sorrows, the defeats and successes, the ups and downs of life.

AND WHEREAS to achieve maximum results towards these objectives.

IT IS HEREBY DECLARED :

A. That this shall be the Charter governing the Sathya Sai Organizations all over the World.

B. That all the office bearers and members of this Organization at present and all those who will join this Organization shall be one in Deed and in Name, by the name of Sri Sathya Organizations and as such, they shall be entitled to carry on the activities in the name of the Organization.

C. That in order to achieve the objectives was as laid down herein above, the members shall follow a strict code of Conduct of Sadhana (Spiritual Exercises) so that they become worthy instruments of our Divine Master in the efforts to fulfil the objectives of this Organization.

D. That no person shall be qualified to associate himself or herself as office bearer or worker with this Organization who wilfully deviates from the Code of Conduct laid down hereinafter.

CODE OF CONDUCT

That in order to remember continuously Bhagwan's teachings and in order to put the same into practice and to be worthy instrument of our Divine Master every member must undergo Sadhana, a spiritual discipline which should be merged with day to day life so as to make Sadhana (Spiritual Exercise) a part of his or her worldly life, and Every member shall make his or her "Family as a Unit" for such Sadhana (Spiritual exercise) :

Thus with a view to qualify to be a true member of the Organization the following guidelines shall be followed :

1. Every day meditation –Japa.
2. Bhajan with all members of the family once a week.
3. Participation in Bal Vikas Programme by Children of the family.
4. Participation in community work and other programmes of the Organization.
5. Attendance at least once a month at Bhajan or Nagar Sankirtan organized by the Organization.
6. Regular study of Sai Literature.
7. To speak softly with everyone.
8. Not to indulge in talking ill of others specially in their absence.
9. Narayana Seva –Some cereals to be kept separate every day to feed the needy and to form habit not to waste food.

APPENDIX 'C' : Bibiliography

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4. Dharama Vahini —do—
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6. Dhyana Vahini —do—
7. Vidya Vahini —do—
8. Gita Vahini —do—
9. Sai Baba : Man or Miracles by Howard Murphat.
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12. Sai Baba and His Message by Dr. S. P. Ruhela and Dr. D. Robinson.
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17. Sai Baba : The Holy Man and the Psychiarist : by S. H. Sandweiss M. D.
18. Sai Chandan, Edited by Prof. V. K. Gokak.
19. We devotees : by Indulal Shah.
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25. Selections From Swami Vivekanand.
26. Golden Age, 1979.
27. Golden Age, 1980.
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30. The Heart of Sai by R. Lowenberg.

MEMORANDUM

TO : The President

FROM : The Secretary

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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